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# THE CONQUEST OF SIBERIA



YURI SEMYONOV

# THE CONQUEST OF SIBERIA

*AN EPIC OF HUMAN PASSIONS*

Translated from the German  
by E. W. DICKES

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS LTD.  
BROADWAY HOUSE: 68-74 CARTER LANE, E.C. 4

DIE EROBERUNG SIBIRIENS: Ein Epos menschlicher Leidenschaften : Der Roman eines Landes

*First published in Berlin, 1937*

*First published in London, 1944*

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE  
CONFORMITY WITH THE AUTHORIZED  
ECONOMY STANDARDS

Printed in Great Britain by T. and A. CONSTABLE LTD.  
at the University Press, Edinburgh

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# LURES

## Chapter I

### THE IRON GATE

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AT the beginning of the twelfth century Russian soil began to be overflowed by the Mongol wave that broke over Europe from the East. The flood was so vast that in spite of all obstacles parts of it surged right into Central Europe. But the main part of the inundation spread over the great Eurasian plain, moving forward for two and a half centuries before its impetus was finally exhausted.

The splendid political, economic, and cultural progression that had begun along the banks of the Dnieper was cut short. Flourishing and populous regions quickly reverted to wilderness. Those who were able to flee fled northwards into the forest country. The Russian Mesopotamia, the "tract between the rivers" Volga and Oka, began to be populated. By the time the wave from Asia had subsided, the region was populous enough. Its inhabitants needed to be organized, incorporated, "gathered." This Moscow did.

Yes, they were "gatherers," these Muscovite successors of the Vikings, with their Slav blood, their Byzantine ideals, and their Mongol lust for dominance. By bloodshed and guile, by treaties and treachery, by gold, by fire and sword, the Russian principalities centred on Moscow added region after region to their realms. They entered on their task as robber barons, continued it as calculating landowners, and completed it as the anointed of the Lord.

One by one the figures of old Moscow file past us in ghostly procession on the ramparts of the Kremlin. There was Ivan, named "the Moneybag," a wizened miser and canting usurer, no adept of the sword but a wizard of the rouble who, with "shrewd humility," gained the land of other princes by extortionate bargaining. There was his eldest son Semyon, who continued his work. He had inherited his father's shrewdness, but not his humility—at all events, not in his relations with the other Russian princes. He passed into history with the nickname "the Proud." There was "Moneybag's" great-grandson Dmitri, "strong, brave, and divinely handsome," according to a chronicler; at eleven years of age he mounted his charger and rode out to battle; he made war against Lithuania, Tver, Ryazan, and the Tatars,

and at twenty-nine, at the head of the Russian forces, he defeated Khan Mamai in the battle of Kulikov.

There was Dmitri's grandson Vassily the Blind, a sorely tried Job of Muscovy, who waged war on all sides for nearly twenty years, was more than once defeated, ruined, and taken captive, and finally was blinded—and who from his eternal darkness continued the vast work of gathering and acquired more than his more fortunate father and the mythical hero who was his grandfather.

There was Ivan III, the first Grand Duke of Muscovy to take the title of "Tsar." The word is derived from "Caesar": the greatness and glory of Imperial Rome filled the thoughts of this prince, though his own father had made the pilgrimage to do homage to the "Golden Horde" of Tatars. Ivan III was among the most successful of the Russian Tsars. He stopped the payments of tribute to the Tatars and, according to the old school-books, "threw off the Tatar yoke"; at all events, Tatar dominance came to its end in his day. He subjugated the republic of Novgorod and seized all its colonies. He extended and beautified Moscow, and brought to Moscow artists and men of learning from Europe.

Yet no trace of the memory of Ivan III remained among his people. Almost every Russian monarch received in history his due popular appellation. There was a Saint Vladimir, a Yaroslav the Wise, a Sviatopolk the Wicked; there was a "Terrible," a "Great," a "Blessed"; Ivan III alone had no nickname. Why? Because he was without any marked characteristics; there was nothing dramatic, nothing striking about him. He steadily rounded off his possessions and, in his later years, his person. Such figures as his do not stimulate the growth of heroic legends.

There was, in very truth, nothing at all of the hero about him. In 1472 the Tatar Khan Ahmed marched against Muscovy with a vast army. Moscow mobilized, and when, four years later, the Tatars reached the Oka they saw the Muscovite army on the farther bank. They saw many Russian banners and still more banners of the church. The Muscovites declared that the Tatars also saw angels with flaming swords above the Muscovite hosts—and the whole slit-eyed horde turned tail.

At home, however, that Tatar army suffered boredom and a little shame, and also a little hunger. And four years later there was the same meeting once more on the same banks. It was early autumn, "old wives' summer," as men call it, with a keen air and with gossamers floating over the fields. Now, prince, your hour has come; are the angels again above your head?

But Ivan could not make up his mind; he hesitated to move; he opened negotiations. The two armies faced each other. At night daredevils swam across the river and stole the Tatars'

horses. By day arrows flew across the river, and still more abuse. Meanwhile the leaves yellowed and fell and great-grandfather Frost came. First he teased the unbidden guests, then he nipped them, and finally he beat them with his bludgeon. And once more they turned their horses round.

And once more they were not pursued.

On the way back they fell out with each other. Ahmed was slain by his vassal Ivak, Prince of Nogai—and the men of the steppe did not condemn the slaying.

That was the end of the Tatar yoke. It was realized at once in Moscow, with exultation. What had saved Moscow? Was it frost or angels? To this day the question remains unanswered. In any case, it was not Grand Duke Ivan.

After this glorious victory over the Tatars, Ivan III felt a true Tsar. He had, moreover, remarried, and his new wife was Sophia, niece of the last Emperor of Byzantium. Byzantium was the heir of Rome, Moscow the heir of Byzantium. Moscow was the third Rome, and there should not be a fourth.

But all the Russian lands must be gathered in, and the way must be found into the outer world. Southward the way was blocked by the Turks, eastward by the Tatars, westward by the Poles and Lithuanians. There remained only north and north-west, the way to the White Sea and to the Baltic. This, however, was blocked by Novgorod.

\* \* \*

From of old Novgorod had been the land of freedom. The men of Novgorod were merchants, and merchants love freedom because freedom helps trade.

A Novgorod tradition was that the Varangians, who had come from Sweden under Rurik as conquerors and had enforced tribute payments, were chased away after a revolt. But the "Varangian connexion" persisted: shrewd old Gostomysl recommended their voluntary recall. He was not disinterested: he had given his daughter in marriage to Rurik.

That was not a pure chance. The aristocracy of Novgorod was undoubtedly formed from a union of the immigrant Scandinavians with the Slavs who had long inhabited the region. Novgorod—"New Town"—was the name the Slavs had given to the fortified place the Varangians had built next to the ancient village. It stood at the point at which the north-south and the west-east routes crossed. Merchants always settle at such points. In the treasure-houses of Novgorod there lay hoards of Byzantine, Arabian, and Persian specie that dated back hundreds of years before Rurik.

By the beginning of the eleventh century the people of Novgorod



were already zealous Christians. Saint Sophia became their patron and protector, and her magnificent temple was their pride and their sacred place. "Where Saint Sophia is, there is Novgorod." The cathedral was indeed the centre of the life of the city. The state exchequer, the documents of state, and the banners were kept there; alongside the cathedral was the archbishop's residence, and in front of it was the square in which the "veche," the popular assembly, met. There stood, too, the tower in which hung the bell that summoned the assembly. The voice of that bell was the voice of Novgorodian liberty. Its mighty clang accompanied every turn in the history of the Novgorodian republic.

The veche was an assembly of Novgorod citizens at which, amid oratory and clamour, applause and abuse, and at times scuffles, the citizens followed the lead of one or other of the aristocratic cliques. In the language of jurists that is called the sovereignty of the people. In form the veche elected all the higher officials, decided peace or war, and ratified treaties with other States. In reality a few dozen patrician families decided the history of Novgorod. They were the guardians of tradition, the mainstays of political continuity, and the holders of all wealth. They built magnificent churches and dwellings, accumulated hoards of gold in the vaulted crypt of Saint Sophia, and surrounded the pictures of the saints with frames set with pearls. Thanks to them, Novgorod was able to purchase on all sides with gold and silver its freedom from Russian princes and Tatar khans, to equip expeditions to far places, to erect monasteries, and to negotiate on terms of equality with such commercial centres as Visby and Lübeck. "All the world prospers thanks to the merchants," said Tamerlane, and he knew what he was saying.

As often happens, the wealth of Novgorod was a consequence of its poverty. The city was favourably situated for commerce but not for agriculture. It was surrounded by marshes, by impassable morasses. Silent lakes and dark woods lay round it. Everything that Novgorod needed for its subsistence was brought in from afar. From the east, from the Volga and the Oka, came corn and every sort of foodstuff. But the Novgorodians could give nothing of their own in exchange; they could only procure from the west, at first from Dutch and later from Hanseatic merchants, the goods their corn suppliers wanted in exchange, fabrics and arms, ironware and glassware. Neither, however, would the Hansa towns give anything for nothing. They demanded in exchange the products of northern forests and seas—furs, honey, wax, tar, potash, fish oil, walrus ivory. The Novgorodians took into their hands the exchange of goods between west and east. And after furs and wax had passed through these hands from one

quarter and textiles and axes from another, there remained in them golden ducats and florins, silver thalers and roubles.

It is good to sell foreign wares, but better still to sell one's own. And sturdy young Novgorodians got into their boats and went down the Volkhov river into Lake Ladoga, and from there by the Svir to Lake Onega; they passed on by river and lake northward and eastward; where they could sail no farther they carried their boats across country to the next waterway, and so reached the Dvina and the White Sea.

The road to the north-east had been traced in part by the Varangians. They had penetrated as early as the ninth century to the country of Perm, to Biarmia, which was rumoured to possess fabulous wealth, and for two centuries they had sent expeditions thither. The little town of Cherdyn, on the Vishera, a tributary of the Kama, was then a trading centre and the capital of the rich province of Biarmia. Here assembled large numbers of merchants from Asia, from India and Persia, from Bokhara and Armenia.

The Novgorodians were pioneers of colonization in the north, and looked upon themselves, as pioneers do, as the bearers of civilization and as missionaries. They were confident that at all times the God of the Christians would be on their side. They founded the city of Khlynov, the present Vyatka, at the conclusion of a successful campaign in which God had stood consistently at their side. He had filled their enemies with terror and beaten them by all sorts of signs from heaven. He had blinded them by tempests, and had actually indicated the site for Khlynov: when the Novgorodians piled timber at a point on the bank of the Vyatka, the water rose and carried all the timber to another spot, and nails and axes dropped from the skies for them.

With such support from on high, no wonder they succeeded. But after their success the colonists from Novgorod, who had been joined by others from Moscow, categorically refused to recognize the overlordship of either city. The men of Khlynov met their "brothers" of Novgorod with armed resistance, and then themselves invaded the Dvina region; they also fell upon the Tatars and in 1391 looted Kazan. After that they kissed the Cross six times in token of submission to the Grand Duke of Muscovy; but whenever envoys appeared from Moscow they chased them away, and the tribute imposed on them they left unpaid.

\* \* \*

Hazardous and difficult were the expeditions from the fair and wealthy Novgorod to the distant lands of primeval forest and the ice-bound coasts of the North. But such is man's nature that if he finds a grain of gold in the forest whole mountains of gold swim before his eyes beyond its confines. Wherever the Novgorodians

came on their north-eastern travels, they acquired by barter furs that had been brought from yet farther north-east. The farther they went, the wilder grew the country and the stranger the peoples, the more biting the cold and the more luxurious the furs. There were regions in which the inhabited forests came to an end and the endless tundra began, where time stood still and the year consisted of only two days, a summer day and a winter day. There stood the "Great Rock," and the way beyond it was closed by the Iron Gate. So did the Novgorod geographers designate the Ural range, beyond which lay a world unknown to them.

As the crow flies, the distance from Novgorod to the Urals is about a thousand miles; by river it is more than twice as much. Men must obviously have been tempted by rich rewards to be prepared to cover that distance not merely by laboriously rowing along the rivers but by carrying their heavy boats, with all their provisions and equipment, across the Urals and from the Pechora to the Sosva. Mountains mock the wanderer: when he has climbed one peak another rises beyond it, and another and another, until his strength is exhausted. And in the northern Urals, where the Novgorodians sought a practicable route, the traveller, after endless climbing, often comes to a bog in which his horse sinks to its belly, and which a man can cross only by jumping—at the end of a long day's march—from tussock to tussock.

When in addition to other trials of the passage the natives prove inhospitable, it goes ill with the traveller. The Ural peoples—the men of Novgorod called them "Ugrians"—were "unclean": they knew nothing of Christian ethics. They could not understand, for instance, why they should pay the young heroes who had fought their way to them a tribute in furs. In 1032 the voyevod Uleb passed through the Iron Gate and returned with booty. In 1079 Prince Gleb Svyatoslavovich set out with a great following and greater expectations, but neither the prince nor a single one of his followers came back. An expedition in 1169 met with success. In 1187, however, another expedition, undertaken by the nobles of Novgorod and joined by a hundred sons of boyars (grandees), came home with no booty and not one boyar's son.

Again and again the Novgorodians reached the distant land of the Ugrians. Again and again they came to grief there, and the impression they formed of the country was not too good. It was reinforced by a high authority. On his campaigns through the whole world, say the Novgorodian writers, Alexander the Great traversed the Great Rock (the Urals) as far as Ugria, which borders the coldest sea in the world. He observed the inhabitants of the country. They fed on every sort of offal, on corpses and carrion; they worshipped idols and knew nothing of Christianity. This

last circumstance particularly outraged Alexander! He prayed to God to free the earth from such inhuman beings. And God heard his prayer and ordained that the Great Rock should encompass the unclean races, permitting only a single copper gate in the encircling rocks; this He locked and bolted fast. Not until the Day of Judgment will that gate open.

A certain Gyurata's "boy" (employee), whom Gyurata had sent in 1096 "on business" to the land of the Ugrians, brought back that story to his master. Gyurata passed it on to the chronicler. There are two points in it that deserve attention. The gate was described as of copper, not iron; the "boy" had clearly discovered that the Urals were rich not only in iron ore but in copper. And, secondly, in his vivid description of the unclean tribes he mentions many things but is silent upon one—the fact that in addition to the "unclean" human beings the land gave shelter to sable, beaver, black and red fox, and polar bears; millions of walrus moved about the ice-bound shores, and buried in the earth were mammoth tusks—that is to say, ivory.

This story is one of the oldest recorded, as Gyurata's was one of the earliest expeditions. At that time very little indeed was known at Novgorod about the Ugrian land. And the shrewd Gyurata knew how to keep trade secrets.

## Chapter 2

### MOSCOW'S FIGHT WITH THE WIDOWS

---

AS the Muscovite princes grew in power and territory their arms grew longer and longer. Thus the lands north of Novgorod became more and more the subject of conflicts. Moscow claimed that their petty princes had sworn allegiance to her, while Novgorod in all her treaties counted them among the regions she ruled. This jurists' controversy was, of course, of no importance; what mattered was that both parties claimed these territories as their own sphere of economic influence.

Whatever the jurists might hold in their controversies over the disputed territories, in point of fact the Novgorodians were on the spot and exercised their "influence" there. The Muscovites made endless mischief: they prepared for war, stirred up discontent, and sought to build up their power. Meanwhile the Novgorodians drew whatever they wanted from their territories—furs, honey, wax, stones from the Urals, copper, tar, and salt from the Vyatka and Perm regions; river pearls, walrus ivory, and blubber from the Pechora, the Dvina, and the White Sea. Trade thrived. The Hansa merchants were thoroughly at home in Novgorod; they were known and appreciated, and their advice was carefully noted in the matter of the merchandise that was in demand.

Merchandise streamed in from north and east. The line of "colonies," "mandates," "protectorates," "spheres," or what you will, stretched from Great Novgorod to the Pechora and the northern slopes of the Urals. This gigantic arc was held together by the fine threads that united the Novgorodian settlements with the few towns and the incense-laden monasteries. Below this arc, and cut off by it from all the northern waters, was an "imperial" Muscovy of growing strength and confidence. It was only a question of time when she would set out to disrupt that barrier.

The second half of the fifteenth century came, the period of the early Renaissance. Europe was divesting herself of mediaevalism as of an outgrown garment; she was heavy with the new age. On the Mediterranean Venice and Genoa were at the height of their glory, and on the Baltic the Hansa towns. On the north-east fringe of Europe Great Novgorod was in the last days of her splendour and was hastening to enjoy them before the approaching end.

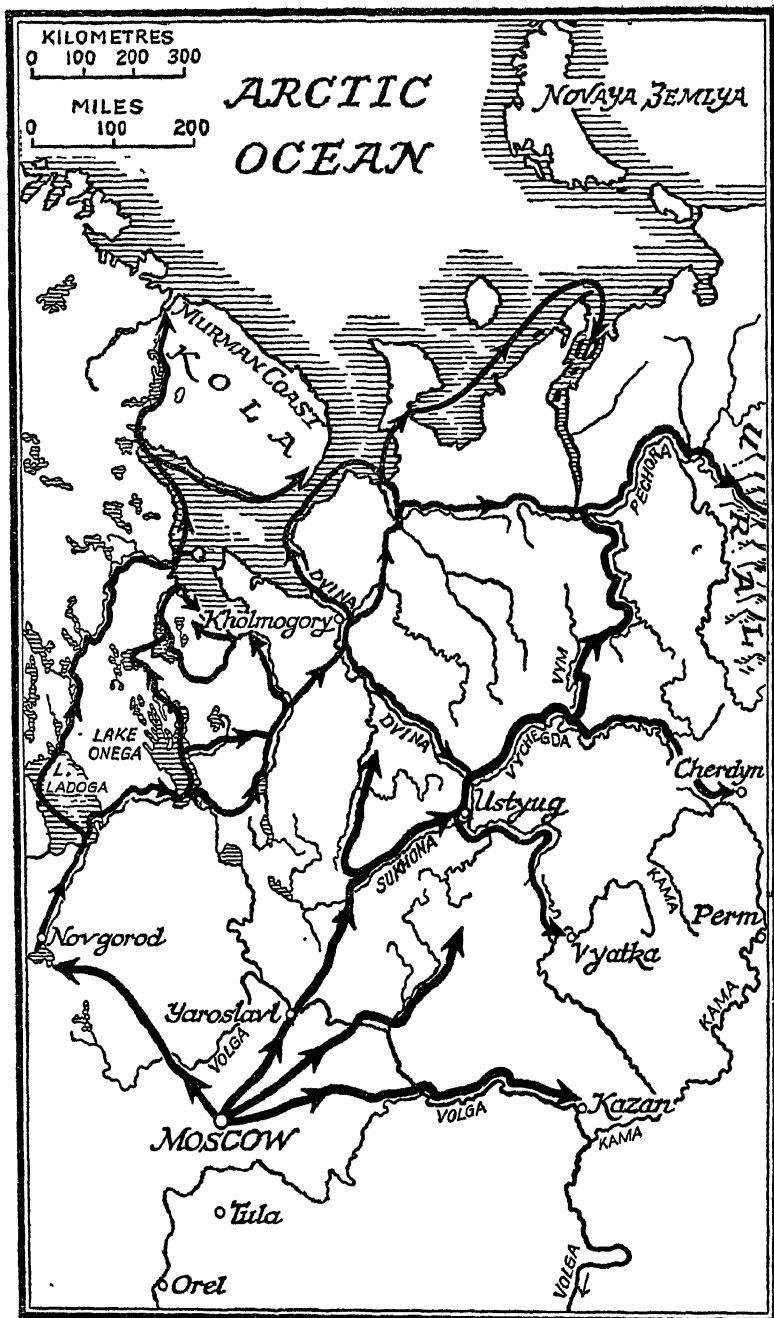
Novgorod was then at the height of her prosperity. The ruling

caste was steadily closing its ranks, and the social struggle was growing steadily keener. Demagogues arose, and the populace, in the words of an old chronicler, "gave itself lightly to the incontinence of freedom." The earlier patriarchal customs sank into the realm of myth. The women's apartments were thrown open, and politics were complicated by amorous intrigues. The woman locked within four walls, the woman who must not lift her eyes in the presence of a strange man, herself half slave and half nun, broke the shackles of age-old tradition at the feet of Saint Sophia of Novgorod. Emancipation came to Lake Ilmen. Women went with their men to the public assemblies, and even ascended the platform as speakers.

Novgorod possessed three famous "political salons" before her end came. Three widows, powerful representatives of distinguished families, were in control of vast possessions. Euphemia, widow of the chief ruler of the city, Yessip Gorshkov, traced her descent direct from Rurik. Her possessions are not precisely recorded, but she owned enormous estates in the northern colonies, and both she and her descendants adorned many ikons in Novgorod with silver frames and precious stones. Anastasia, widow of the boyar Ivan Grigorevich, was of no less noble origin, and was reputed to have even greater possessions. She was known to be the owner of at least fifty villages along the river Vech and of more than a hundred on the shores of Lake Onega. The inhabitants of these villages were not her slaves or serfs, but they paid tribute to her: in return for the tenure of their farms they were required to send her half the crops.

But the chief of the widows was the third. Today her name belongs to saga and history; four centuries ago it was a political programme. Earlier, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, in the days of the Novgorodians who extorted tribute and practised piracy on the rivers, there came to the land of Perm the first colonial merchant adventurer on the grand scale, a pioneer of industry who brought capital—not only the sword but the spade. His name was Svoyezemtsev. He carried on a vast trading organization, buying all that grew upon the earth or ran across it, all that lay in its womb and all that swam in the waters; he was the first to set up salt-making works in the region. Toward the end of the century he was the richest man in Novgorod and in all the Russia of his day.

Soon there emerged other Novgorodian families famous for their possessions—the Ananyins, the Loshinskys, and others. The longer-settled territories, those nearer to Novgorod, had for generations been in the hands of other families of boyars—the Akinfiyevs, the Boretskys, and others. When Martha, daughter of the boyar Loshinsky, was married to Izaak Boretsky, two huge



ROUTES OF NOVGORODIAN AND MUSCOVITE  
TRADE EXPANSION

"spheres of influence" were united. Perm joined hands with the White Sea. Colonial enterprises were united with hereditary estates.

The "high finance" of Novgorod also contributed its part to this union. Martha had been the wife of the boyar Philip, a cosmopolitan financier and, as a matter of course, a "Westerner," consorting with men from the West. If a guest in Philip's house did not know Russian, it caused no sensation: the conversation went on in German, interspersed with Latin flowers of speech, as later the Russian aristocrats used French. Precious wine from Burgundy was drunk there, poured from Bohemian decanters into Venetian bowls, to wash down gingerbread from Nuremberg.

Martha's first marriage had not been happy. Her husband died early. Then her two sons were drowned on her estate on the Karelian coast. Martha exacted cruel penalties from their tutors and nurses; then she resolved to shut herself off from the world. But she must have a nunnery of her own. She built it and conveyed to it three villages, with tilled land and fisheries, for its maintenance. Having done this, she discovered that the time was not ripe for her retirement. Life was not at an end for her, as "Posadnik" (mayor) Izaak Boretsky, a handsome man and the chief magistrate of the city, demonstrated unanswerably. A union with him brought the promise of power, and for the cruel-hearted power is sweeter than grief and more tempting than love.

Izaak Boretsky died about 1460. His widow was the richest woman of Novgorod. Her palace stood in the aristocratic quarter of the city on the bank of the Volkhov. Marvellous things were related of the banquets at the palace. The people could judge of them from the feastings they were themselves accorded from time to time. What must it be like in the banqueting-halls, where the boyars, the foreign envoys, and the archbishop himself were guests! "Wonder Court" was the name the Novgorodians gave to Martha's palace, and a stranger had but to ask for "Wonder Court" and any child would take him straight there.

She had estates in every part of the Novgorod region—by the lake-sides, along the Upper Volga, along the Dvina and the Kama, everywhere. She owned nineteen villages on the banks of the river Suma, and forty-nine by Lake Koldo. How many fisheries and apiaries she owned, and how much gold and silver was stored in her vaults, no man could say.

After her husband's death her power grew yet greater. The men at the head of the city came and went, but the woman at the head remained. Decisions were made in her house before they were referred to the veche. Petitions came to her; she lifted men up and cast them down.

Storm-clouds were already gathering over Novgorod at this



time. Martha and her friends knew that Moscow was out to crush their republic. They knew that Moscow was stronger than they were. They knew especially that if Moscow made an end of the import of grain into Novgorod the great city would have to feed its people, a full hundred thousand, on German honey-cakes and Indian pepper.

There had long been discussions at the meetings in Martha's palace. Either there would have to be submission to Moscow—in which case, goodbye colonies, goodbye Hansa!—or a strong protector must be found. And they had chosen one. A secret agreement had been concluded with Casimir IV, King of Poland and Lithuania. The cry was to be: Great Novgorod is our ruler and the King of Poland our protector.

Moscow knew of all this. Moscow had her friends at Novgorod. The clergy of Orthodox Novgorod would have nothing to do with the protectorate of a Catholic king. The Metropolitan of Moscow called for resolute action.

In the spring of 1471 preparations began in Moscow for the campaign. The census-takers travelled throughout the land, followed by the recruiting officers. Messengers rode in haste to the vassal princes and to the Novgorodian colonies. There were not a few in those colonies who were ready to give support to Moscow.

At the head of the army that marched against Novgorod was the voyevod of Moscow, Prince Kholmsky. He began the campaign by marching through the Novgorodian lands with fire and sword. He burned down the larger towns, and of the villages through which he passed only heaps of ashes remained. As he approached Novgorod he tried new methods of exerting moral pressure: he cut off the noses and ears of his prisoners and sent the victims, thus mutilated, into the "Free City" to revel in its freedom.

The Novgorodians revelled in their freedom for the last time. The *veche* met oftener than ever. Martha's party dominated it. The first woman of the city came with the councillors to the assembly. Her tall figure, wrapped in a cloak of black sable, her pale face, her sons and her train of confidential advisers, cast a spell over the assembly.

But time was passing, and Prince Kholmsky was coming nearer with his cavalry. And the promised troops from Lithuania and Poland did not arrive: all that arrived was a multitude of mutilated warriors. Novgorod's standing army was diminutive—two to three thousand men.

Martha did what she could. The bell of the *veche* tolled incessantly, summoning the people to the square in front of Saint Sophia for military service. Detachments rode throughout the city, seizing men in the streets; press-gangs forced their way into

the houses and drove fathers and sons to the enrolment centres. Soon a miscellaneous mob marched forth to face the armies of Moscow.

The clash came along the banks of the river Shelon. On one bank was the cold and confident Prince Kholmsky, an experienced and able professional soldier, a master of the art of bloodshed, ready at any moment to pour out his own and others' life-blood. On the other bank was Martha's son, the weak and boastful Dmitri Boretsky, spoilt darling of fate, with a little of the diplomat's and much of the courtier's skill, *persona grata* at the court of Casimir IV, King of Poland and Lithuania.

Against all the rules of strategy and tactics, the Muscovite troops crossed the river in full view of the enemy, and threw themselves against the Novgorodians. The Novgorodians shouted: "We will die for Saint Sophia!" Kholmsky helped them to do so. He had no love for taking prisoners. Twelve thousand Novgorodians fell on the field; the prisoners taken were less than two thousand. Among the prisoners were Dmitri Boretsky and the whole of his staff.

The prisoners were brought to the town of Rusa, to the headquarters of Ivan III, Grand Duke of Muscovy. There the documents of Boretsky's staff were examined. They included correspondence with the Government of Lithuania! On the following day, on a quickly erected scaffold, Dmitri Boretsky was beheaded, in the presence of a crowd of his former subjects in Novgorod. Three boyars shared his fate.

Novgorod's will to war was broken. Martha shut herself into her palace. The bell tolled, but none came to the *veche* save advocates of peace with Moscow. The city was starving. Trenches were dug round it and cannon hauled into position. The neighbouring villages, monasteries, and churches were burnt down, on the demand of the strategists. But at night the cannons were spiked. The culprits were caught and executed. After that the daily desertions to Kholmsky grew even more numerous.

When the voyevod of the distant Dvina region, Prince Vassily Shuisky, returned to Novgorod, it was realized in the city that all was lost. Shuisky had been sent out to protect the Dvina territory. With twelve thousand men he had opposed the Muscovite army along the Dvina river, and had been defeated.

Novgorod admitted its guilt for the "insurrection" against the Grand Duke. The envoys from the *veche* pleaded on their knees for Ivan's forgiveness. The archbishop appealed to him in the name of God. Ivan forgave. He even returned the Dvina territory to Novgorod, retaining for himself only the remainder of the city's possessions. In his lovingkindness he even relieved the *veche* of the cares of defence and foreign relations; these

would thenceforth be Moscow's concern. At the same time he permitted the Novgorodians to take the oath of loyalty to him. And finally he relented so far as to accept eighty poods of silver as a gift.

On January 15, 1472, Prince Kholmsky entered Novgorod with his army and administered the oath to the inhabitants of the city. All were required to take it—boyars, merchants, and the common people. Kholmsky knew who controlled Novgorod's affairs: he insisted that the oath should be taken also by the wives and above all by the widows of boyars. And the proud Martha came and took the oath with her youngest son Fyodor.

All seemed to be as before; but it only seemed so. In the following year the great region of Perm became exclusively a Muscovite sphere of influence. The petty prince Mikhail ruled it from Cherdyn. He had turned now to the Muscovite and now to the Novgorodian envoy, and had shrewdly conducted affairs in such a way that each side counted him as its own. After the fall of Novgorod, Moscow needed only a pretext for making an end of that double game. The pretext was soon found. Muscovite merchants in Cherdyn had been "insulted." They had been many times before; but this time a great army marched against Perm, and Prince Mikhail was soon on his way to Moscow as a prisoner. His son was set in his place: he had at once declared his unqualified loyalty. "Insults" were not at an end in the Perm region, but the Muscovite merchants no longer suffered them, only inflicted them.

Even in Novgorod the people were vastly mistaken if they supposed that nothing had changed. It was a curious thing that, even after the fearful collapse, the power remained in the hands of Martha's followers. She herself was seldom seen. She had aged, and kept in the background. She declared that she intended to devote herself entirely to the education of her grandson, the son of the unfortunate Dmitri. But soon Novgorod detected signs of her hand: her second son, Fyodor, was elected *posadnik*.

Martha was trying to restart the lost game. Blind with anger and resentment, nursing only thoughts of revenge, she was no longer able to judge events soundly. Her son Fyodor was entirely incompetent. Cautiously her friends hinted it to her. In the city his inadequacy was openly discussed; the Novgorodians called him, good-humouredly and almost tenderly—the Duffer. And this duffer Martha had made head of the city!

Some of Fyodor's measures had aroused protests from the smaller traders. He determined to teach them a lesson. With a body of friends and relatives he embarked on a punitive expedition in the merchants' quarter. The gay young sons of boyars seized the opportunity they had missed on the banks of the Shelon.

They went to work with a will, chastised and plundered the enemy, and returned to their aristocratic quarter with their trophies.

Soon after this, Grand Duke Ivan determined to make a visit, at long last, to "his" city of Novgorod. He came with a large following. The clergy and the secular authorities received him at the gates of the city. The Grand Duke did obeisance to Saint Sophia and lunched with the archbishop. After the meal he slept; and then he shut himself up with the Governor in the Governor's office. Next day the whole gay company of rioting Duffers were arrested. Complaints against them poured out like corn from a slit sack.

The Duffers were found guilty, and paid damages amounting to fifteen thousand roubles in silver to the plaintiffs. It was a vast sum, as much as a tenth of the indemnity which all Novgorod had had to pay four years earlier. When it was paid the culprits were led away in chains and sent to various remote monasteries. With Fyodor Boretsky went the son of another of the proud widows, Euphemia Gorshkova. Nothing more is known of Euphemia's son; Fyodor lived but a year as a monk, and then died.

Ivan stayed two months in Novgorod. He was in the best of good-humour. Banquet followed banquet. Ivan was no despiser of invitations. He was feasted by the archbishop and the posadnik and the vice-posadnik. Even the invitation of Prince Shuisky, the voyevod of the Dvina region who had been overtaken by misfortune, was accepted, and even that of the shrewd Anastasia, third of the recalcitrant widows, who had said not long before in her salon that one could see from the beards of the Russian "popes" (priests) what they had had for dinner, whereas the Polish priests were fragrant as roses. Now she confided to the Grand Duke's chaplain that she was going to Moscow to wash the holy feet of the Metropolitan, and to drink the water thus sanctified.

Martha had not that subtlety. She could not bend—she broke. In the name of her grandson Ivan, costly gifts were presented to the Grand Duke who had beheaded Ivan's father. The gifts were handed over by her brother-in-law, who asked in Martha's name for the honour of a visit from the Grand Duke. The gifts were accepted, but not the invitation.

It seemed as if the struggle was over. But there were still details to attend to—the *veche*, and a certain Novgorodian "democracy," and, far more important, the still existing trade with the Hansa cities and with the Novgorodian "spheres of influence." Finally, there were those in Novgorod who still breathed the old spirit, intriguing widows with all sorts of relatives and connexions. An end must be made of them.

It was soon done. Novgorodian envoys "insulted" the Grand Duke's own person. At a reception in Moscow they omitted the due address. Novgorod apologized, but its apologies were considered inadequate.

Martha was living in strict retirement with her grandchildren at Wonder Court. She no longer appeared in the *veche*, she no longer visited anyone; but visitors still came to her. Sometimes the sharpest way is the shortest. The cautious Ivan did not realize this. He was afraid to kill the old she-wolf; instead he lopped off a bit of her tail. At first, however, he left her entirely undisturbed, and the people of Novgorod began to think that she was the stronger of the two. But the stars pursued their courses, revealing men's destiny. In the spring of 1477 Wonder Court was burnt to the ground. Martha was homeless.

In the following year the Grand Duke's troops marched against the free city. They had no need to fight. The Novgorodians tried to open negotiations; the *veche* met and appointed a commission. But the Grand Duke replied to every delegation: "There must be an end of the *veche*; bring down its bell!"

When the capitulation was signed he entered the city. Once more the people greeted him with acclamation, once more there were banquets and gifts. But this time the last bit of the tail was chopped off. The bell was brought down and hauled to Moscow. At first it was hung in the Uzpensky Cathedral. Later it appears to have been recast and hung elsewhere. During the war with the Swedes Peter the Great ordered that the bells should be melted down for cannon. It may be that the old brawler boomed for the last time somewhere in the battle of Narva or of Poltava; or it may still hang in some belfry; or may, perhaps, be passing from pocket to pocket as small change: who can say? Copper lives longer than men, longer even than Grand Dukes.

This time the Grand Duke demanded a drastic indemnity. The figures are not known, but it is recorded that he took with him three hundred waggons laden with spoil. He took the precious stones from the archbishop's sacristy, he took the gold and silver hoards of Novgorod, he took furs and foreign wares of all sorts. Finally, the property of the persons taken captive and exiled was confiscated for the grand ducal exchequer. And the captives included the majority of those who had given hospitality to the Grand Duke at his first visit. Martha, with many others, went into exile. With her little grandson, the son of Fyodor the Duffer, she was banished to a nunnery near Nizhni-Novgorod. There she ended her days as a poor penniless nun.

But what is money? Was it over money that the old woman wept in the long nights, when memory silently unrolled its poisoned parchment before her?

She had been cruel and arrogant, she had sown tears and reaped blood. But she could not be other than she was. She was born a she-wolf, and for that those who made her were to blame. God had punished her with success and rewarded her with suffering. At least her life had been free from all deceit.

Her people, however, who had neither good words nor bad for the victor, created a legend around this defeated woman. In the region to which Martha was banished there was a wealthy boyar who set out to build a church. He gave orders for a collection to be made, and promised that he would add to it whatever remained necessary. Every man came and offered what he could. The nun Martha came, and offered—a kopek.

The church was then built out of the boyar's vast fortune. When the building was completed and the church was being consecrated, an angel appeared to its pope and said:

"That one kopek from Martha pleased God more than the boyar's many thousands. Pray for the rest of her soul; and may all the faithful pray for her as long as there are churches in Holy Russia."

## Chapter 3

### SACRED AND PROFANE PATHS

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AFTER Perm, Moscow "gathered" Vyatka. The people of Khlynov were glad of the destruction of Novgorod. They had sedulously sided with Moscow, and had helped to defeat Shuisky by the Dvina and Boretsky by the Shelon. It had not penetrated their raiders' mentality that in doing so they had made an end of their own freedom.

They went on doing what they had often done in the past: they raided the now Muscovite town of Ustyug and the now Muscovite colonists in the Perm region. Meanwhile their new neighbours merely waited for an opportunity of teaching the robbers a lesson.

When the troops of Moscow appeared before the gates of Khlynov, the "robbers" attempted to offer resistance. They refused to deliver up three of their ringleaders. They were forced to do so by the firing of every quarter of their city. The Moscow judges admitted no extenuating circumstances. The leaders were not only "rebels" but, still worse, perjured rebels. They were publicly whipped and then hanged. After this all suspected elements were expelled from Vyatka, and their place was taken by colonists from Moscow. Whole suburbs of Vyatka received a new population in this way.

The wheel of life rolled on. Moscow had its tragedies, and Novgorod had no fewer. The merchants of Novgorod were faced with ruin, and the Hansa merchants, too, were ruined. For two and a half centuries they had been building the road to the east. They had not only established themselves in Novgorod but had penetrated far into its territories. German cloth and German knives, German breeches and German mittens were familiar from the Gulf of Finland to the "Great Rock." Some articles of merchandise were not of German origin, but they spread Germany's fame and filled German pockets none the less. After the final subjugation of Novgorod, trade with the Hansa was at once prohibited. Nine years later it was permitted once more. Then it was sometimes permitted and sometimes not; for a time the Hansa merchants were even permitted to carry on their trade not only via Novgorod but across the White Sea. This happened after Dutch and English merchants had made their appearance in northern Russia in addition to the Hanseatic traders. The

latter had to carry on their trade on a basis of parity with the others; their last privileges were gone.

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Moscow, having cleared away the last vestiges of the independence of the north, had assured free access for its merchants to the White Sea and the Urals. But it was not only the interests of its merchants that compelled Moscow to send its armies to the far north; it had also to protect its colonists.

The monasteries were the bastions of that early colonization. The church traded on an equal footing with the capitalists. The union between religion and commerce is instanced by the monasteries which were built with merchants' money, and by the trading centres which exist to this day at the spots where monasteries stood in the past. The two functions were distributed in accordance with the abilities and the inclinations of the two rival centres: the Novgorodians sent out colonizers in the form of merchants; Muscovite Russia sent out monks.

The two elements played into each other's hands. The wealthy boyar Svoyezemtsev built a monastery by the river Vaga, and at the end of his days he entered it himself as a monk. The Novgorodians were acquisitive but also pious. A boyar of Novgorod would buy from the petty princes of a region, for a few axes and a barrel of vodka, the "right" to several square miles of territory, and would bring its whole population under his heel; but he would be anxious to acquire rights in heaven after his death.

The Muscovite settlements along the river Sukhona, a tributary of the Dvina, cut like a wedge into the Novgorodian colonies. Here lay the town of Ustyug. It was a wealthy town, for it lay at the crossing of the routes leading from Novgorod and Moscow to the Urals. Its inhabitants were Russian; consequently it had a cathedral, and the cathedral had a priest, and the priest a deacon, and the deacon a sacristan; in the year 1345 a son was born to the sacristan. This son, Stephen, later played a part of vast importance in the history of the north of Russia; the Orthodox church added him to the blessed company of saints.

Like all the boys of Ustyug, Stephen used to stroll about the streets of Ustyug, and especially about the market. There he made the acquaintance of Zyryans and learned their language. There he also made the acquaintance of his future flock. The market was the saint's first school.

Stephen quickly caught up and passed his father, becoming deacon of the cathedral while his father was still sacristan. Then he entered a monastery in the north of Russia. For ten years he lived a hard, ascetic life there, training for the higher priesthood; he also studied the Greek language. A brilliant career



opened before the gifted young divinity student. His comrades, preferring the well-worn path, went to Moscow to clean the doorsteps of the Metropolitan's offices and to angle for a good benefice. Stephen preferred to go his own way.

He returned to his native city of Ustyug. And there he proceeded to demonstrate the faith that was in him. He resolved to visit the Zyryans, those poor inhabitants of the region of Perm, whom he had so despised as a boy for their "uncleanness"—to visit them and convert them to Christianity. Like the natives of Perm, they brought hides and fowls and wild honey to the market at Ustyug. They had the parchment-grey skin and the bright eyes of the men of Perm, but were even shorter in stature. Alongside them a Russian peasant seemed a giant.

Attempts had already been made to convert these pagans and "rogues" to the true faith by water and fisticuffs. Stephen was the first to bring the Word to them. He compiled a Zyryan grammar, and translated the Scriptures into Zyryan. He expounded the Word of God to these heathen in their own language. This he did in the fourteenth century.

He did not remain in his native city of Ustyug. He went to the north-east, crossed the Dvina, and went up the Sukhona and then up its tributary the Vym. The sources of the Vym are near those of the Pechora. This region was inhabited by the Zyryans, and the monastery and town of Ust-Vymysk, which Stephen founded there, became the centre of Christian civilization in that remote forest wilderness. From there Stephen set out to preach. He challenged the Zyryan sorcerers to theological disputations. He defeated them with his eloquence and his personal charm. He burned down their temples and their idols, and together with the idols he burned down all the stored-up wealth of the temples, whole stocks of furs, before the eyes of the Zyryans, who saw with amazement the impotence of their gods and their priests in face of this little monk. He accepted the challenge of a Zyryan sorcerer to undergo the test of fire and water; according to the legend, he was not burnt by the fire and was not drowned in the water, but the sorcerer disappeared when the moment for his trial came and was seen no more.

In place of the poor little burnt temples Stephen built churches, modest chapels of wood. To the natives they seemed the acme of magnificence; the congregations were dazzled by the silver frames of the saints' pictures. They saw that Stephen was not interested in furs, and that he asked no tribute of them; he promised them blessedness in heaven, and on earth he healed their ailments and gave them bread.

The Zyryans were pious people after their fashion. They always had something to ask from their gods, and if their prayers

were not granted they took down the gods from the walls and thrashed them. When Stephen burned their gods' images the Zyryans wept. Then they allowed themselves to be baptized, and after that they fell upon the monks by way of revenge for their lost illusions. They could not yet appreciate the new ones.

Stephen built church after church, farther and farther north and nearer and nearer to the Pechora and the "Rock." Russian settlers gathered round the churches, which gave them moral support and material assistance. These centres were the sources of information and the means of communication with the world; here the latest news was learned and the spiritual life discussed.

Ten years passed in these labours. The tasks which Stephen saw ahead grew constantly in scope. In his city of Ust-Vymsk there lived monks and warriors, artisans and men of letters. Moscow appreciated the value of clerical colonization: Stephen was consecrated as bishop.

The Muscovite voyevods were instructed to give all support to the bishop of Perm. He made only moderate use of this support, but his influence grew equally among Russians, Zyryans, and Permians. Native princes and the common people alike turned to him for aid when the Muscovite authorities pressed them too hard. He had become the intermediary between his people and the Grand Dukes of Muscovy. He was always on his travels, and at times made official journeys to Moscow. On one of these journeys he died, at the early age of fifty-one.

But he had laid sound foundations. A whole series of successors continued his work. The bishopric of Perm became a mighty spiritual principality, owning vast lands and many villages and monasteries. Its political influence was immense. Long before Siberia was reduced to subjection, the ecclesiastical princes of Perm acted as arbiters between its native rulers.

The course of the Vym, which Stephen had chosen for his deeds of spiritual heroism, was at that time the principal route to the Pechora and the northern Urals. Colonists moved along the latter river. In 1499 a great expedition from Moscow took this route to the Ugrian land. At its head was Prince Semyon Kurbsky. He was the appropriate commander of a company moving along sanctified paths, for in Moscow he was regarded as almost a saint himself. He was a vegetarian and an ascetic, and a man of outstanding piety.

His company numbered four thousand, and all of these crossed the Pechora in winter and penetrated beyond the Urals as far as the Ob. But Kurbsky was unable to remain there.

The voyevods drove with reindeer over the tundra, the common soldiers with dogs, according to the chronicler. It is not easy to believe that four thousand men made the journey in dog-sleighs;

there were not enough dogs in the whole of the tundra. In any case, it was an expedition on an ambitious scale. Kurbsky returned with reduced ranks, but with more than a thousand prisoners. These prisoners probably took the place of the dogs on the return journey. Such things were done at that time and later.

The vegetarian Kurbsky's tundra expedition had no success. It demonstrated that the route taken by Saint Stephen was not suitable for regular traffic with Siberia. A further century of exploration had to pass before a more practicable route was found. After the saint and the voyevod the merchants had to resume the search.

## Chapter 4

### THE CHOICE OF OBJECTIVE

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IN the heroic days of Dmitri Donskoy, when the Russian princes were putting forth their utmost efforts to withstand the onslaught of the hordes of the Tatar chieftain Mamai, Novgorod's energies were devoted to the task of economic expansion. Brave pioneers set out for new regions. Their perils were no less than those of the struggle with the Tatars, but their chances of gain were distinctly better.

One of the pioneers was a man named Spiridon, of Novgorod. He was not of particularly distinguished ancestry, and nothing is known of any activities of his in the service of the State. He established himself in the region of the Dvina, as a trader: there he bought and bartered raw materials, carried them to Novgorod, sold them to the Hansa merchants, and returned with goods to his home by the Dvina. He was always accompanied by a band of vigorous youths who were devoted to his service. He watched carefully over his own property, and was not averse from the occasional appropriation of that of other people.

This Spiridon was the first of the Stroganovs of whom we have any credible record in history. He died in 1395, leaving many children. His eldest son, Kosma, lived well into the next century, continuing his father's activities. He built warehouses of his own for the custody of his goods, and gained the reputation of a substantial merchant.

The turbulent fifteenth century passed on; branches of this family spread in various directions, and the direct line grew steadily in power. Kosma's son Luka was already a great man in the Dvina region. He further extended the trading activities of his forefathers. Like his father and grandfather, he brought furs and all sorts of raw materials to Novgorod. But he was the first to move in a fresh direction, and in doing so he determined the destiny of the whole race of the Stroganovs. He sensed the coming Muscovite inundation from the south, and instead of moving away from it as others did, he went out to meet it, and to draw profit from it.

The Grand Duke of Muscovy had great possessions along the Dvina. His representatives were at the mercy of the Novgorodian administrators. The properties were too far from their owner's sight, and they brought little in. Luka took the administration of a large part of these properties on lease; he collected imposts

from them, retained a proportion for himself, and sent the rest to Moscow.

In this way he entered into association with Novgorod's enemy. But he did not break off relations with the great city. He did not forget the churches of Novgorod in dispensing his gifts, and he employed Novgorodians in his service. One day a boyar from Moscow came to check his accounts and receive dues from him. After this business had been completed the two sat over a bowl of "romanée" wine.

"Why do you not come some time to see the Grand Duke, Luka," said the boyar, "and make your bow to him and enter his service?"

Luka laughed. "Do you see, boyar, it is just as with the maidens—before the wedding, adored mistress; after the wedding, cook."

But there were great business prospects over there, in wealthy Moscow. This the far-seeing merchant saw more and more clearly. Luka sent to Moscow, via Ustyug, not only the Duke's revenues but his own wares of Novgorod and Hansa origin. The Novgorodian raids on Ustyug incensed him. One day a gang of these "fellow-citizens" of his visited him and asked for his support. They were a dismal band of heroes, and this particular scheme of theirs was a dismal failure, for instead of plunder they carried home wounds and bruises. Luka had met them at the gates of his country house with brother Novgorodians of theirs who had taken service with him as guards. Like Christ he distributed bread and fishes among them, but after that he chased them off. "You are a pack of damned thieves," he told them, "and breakers of the commandments. Thou shalt not steal, says the Scripture." Then, looking hard at the downcast crowd, he added: "You can't even steal properly!"

Luka had seen the advantage of turning to Moscow, and went ahead unhesitatingly. One of his ventures shows how a man will rise above the past generations of his acquisitive forefathers and suddenly begin to make history. It is associated with the fate of the most tragic of the Moscow "gatherers," Grand Duke Vassily the Blind. Tatars had taken a hand in the internal strife between the Russian princes, and Vassily had fallen prisoner to the khan of Kazan, who sent a demand for ransom to Moscow. The chroniclers are at variance over the actual sum demanded: their figures range between twenty-nine thousand and two hundred thousand roubles. The latter figure seems entirely incredible; even twenty-nine thousand roubles represented a fantastic sum at that time. In any case, the Tatars were not prepared to forgo for nothing the pleasure of boarding up a Grand Duke and making a bonfire of him for a night's orgies (a frequent entertainment of theirs): he must pay a vast sum for his liberation.

Money was not to be found, however, in ruined Moscow. Luka Stroganov provided it. Whether he provided the whole or only a part is immaterial; what did matter was that he had to turn a large part of his fortune into ready money, and he made the sacrifice without having any guarantee that after release the blind man would remain Grand Duke. Luka can hardly have taken this action on sentimental grounds. These may have influenced him, but in any case reason must have played the predominant part: Luka had never made such a sacrifice before, even for his own son. The destiny of the house of Stroganov was already bound up with that of the Dukes of Muscovy. Luka had plans, of which he spoke to none; and he could only carry them out in association with Moscow. Without hesitation he sent the money, making no condition of any sort.

His deed was not forgotten in Moscow. In the Tsarist charter granted a hundred and fifty years later to Luka's descendants we read:

"In evil times boyars and merchants gave money to the State, but demanded in pledge for it pearls, furs, precious vessels, and tavern revenues"—that is to say, the right to sell vodka free of excise duty. "But the Stroganovs took no pledges and sought no advantages for themselves."

It was a fine gesture on the part of the Stroganovs; but it was not merely a fine gesture: it was one of those that point into the future. Like Luka Stroganov, and at the same time, the boyars and merchants of Novgorod chose their course. They prepared to murder Vassily the Blind. Luka bought his freedom, and so the ways parted. The severance continued in the generations that followed: Luka's son and grandson turned to Moscow; Martha Boretsky and her sons turned their backs on it.

Martha was one of the ill-starred characters of history. She set herself against the course of history in a hopeless cause—and ruined her house. Luka was a hero of the art of ciphering: he calculated, measured, weighed. He never challenged the course of history: he followed it—and he built up his house.

## Chapter 5

### ANIKA STROGANOV

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THE house of Stroganov did not at once discover its best headquarters. Luka had established himself by the Dvina. But his son Fyodor already found insufficient opportunity there, and dreamed of other regions nearer Moscow. He followed in the direction pointed by his father's "gesture." He left the Dvina and settled by the Vychegda, in the remote village of Solvyche-godsk. "Sol" is Russian for "salt." The new residence involved new work. It turned the Stroganovs from merchants into industrialists.

Fyodor maintained the family tradition of piety. God was the sleeping partner in all his enterprises. All through his life he cultivated good relations with heaven in the person of God's representative on earth, and at the end of his days, as an aged man, he finally consecrated himself to the Lord: under the name Theodosius he entered a monastery as a monk.

Two years before this, when the old man was already, so to say, being measured for his cowl, another son, the fourth, was born to him. This late arrival, Anika, the last pale gleam before sunset, grew up to be the mightiest and most famous pillar of the house of Stroganov.

It should be mentioned at once that at Fyodor's death his sons divided the inheritance, so that at the outset Anika was by no means endowed with the great landed possessions which his father had left, but only with a quarter of them. His brothers took for themselves the lands in the various parts of the Ustyug region; Anika remained at Solvyche-godsk.

He was seventeen years old when he became master of his house. He was tall and lean and of pleasant appearance, "with no distinguishing features"; he had dark hair and bright eyes. His education had already been completed: he could read and write, knew all the requisite prayers by heart, and could have celebrated mass no worse than a pope, as from his childhood he had helped the priest to robe himself, had carried the Bible for him, and had sung in the choir.

When Fyodor had chosen the site for his home he had not settled in the immediate neighbourhood of the other local estates; he had gone to a lonely spot seven versts (about five miles) away from them. It was not a promising district: the forest had to be cleared and a morass drained. But close by was a salt lake.

Youngsters of seventeen are generally dreamers: some dream of love and some of distant seas and unknown lands. Anika probably had his dreams of love, but he had no need to dream of unknown lands, for they lay at his gate. And instead of distant seas he devoted his attention to the salt lake close by.

His father had already begun to make salt here, and other settlers had done the same. The lake was surrounded with primitive salt-works. The process was very simple: a well was dug, as deep as possible, and a wheel was erected above it; the brine from the well flowed through conduits into the salt-pan, which was heated by a wood-fire. The water evaporated, leaving the salt in the pan.

In this region there was a bed of rock-salt beneath the surface; it was this that impregnated the subsoil water. Anika now did what Rockefeller did in Pennsylvania three and a half centuries later—he began to swallow up first his neighbours' properties and then the more distant ones. Whence this appetite in a seventeen-year-old? Perhaps it was simply hereditary—as the duckling will go straight out of its egg into the water, or the baby spider will catch flies.

Records of young Anika's purchases have been preserved. He bought, for instance, from Avdotya, wife of a certain Maximov, a "plot with well and all appliances" for twenty roubles. The sisters Voronizyn sold him one-third of their property for three roubles; the "widow Maria, daughter of the pope," let a part of her salt-works pass out of her hands, and then, a year later, a further part; then probably the pope's daughter was compelled herself to work for wages in her own former salt-works, unless she found a second husband.

Are these scanty records uninteresting? Not for those who know what may be read into them. Beware, little fishes, a young pike is shooting up and down the lake! Down will go one little smelt after another, without ceremony, down his sharp-toothed throat. Yakov Truphanov was his own master; flip, there he goes! Another, rather bigger fish, Yuri, does not give in so easily; he can only be swallowed bit by bit. First he has a salt-pan bitten off, then another, and then his well—and finally his house and land. Five years pass, and nothing but a memory remains of the salt-works owner Yuri.

Here is another interesting record. The representative of the vovoyed Prince Tokmakov has sold a salt-works for seven roubles to a certain Agapit Dudorov. Agapit has six whole days in which to hug himself over his bargain; on the seventh, for some reason, he resells it for the same seven roubles to Anika Stroganov. Anika knew better than to come forward himself as buyer from the prince, who would have asked a very different price from *him*.



This went on for ten years or so; by then the majority of the salt-works had come into Anika's hands. The business grew; its director was not idle. The works were improved—rationalized—and the main difficulty, sales, was overcome by organization on a grand scale. The salt went down the Vychegda and up the Dvina in barges, and then up the Sukhona to Ustyug for transport to Moscow. Luka's "gesture" pointed the direction. There was no salt in the Moscow region, and none in central Russia! The Hansa merchants had imported salt from Bruges into Novgorod, and the Novgorodians had carried it on to the Volga. Right through the Russian black earth region, everywhere paying dues and octroi, peasants braved Tatar arrows and Cossack sabres in order to carry salt from the Crimea to Moscow!

That was why Moscow was at all times friendly to the Stroganovs. They had learnt the secret of business success—to make oneself useful to those whom one intends to use.

Another ten years passed, and now Anika's sons began to help their father. Anika had fulfilled the dream of love at the same time as the dream of the lake. Of the manner of the opening of his heart we know nothing. His wife was named Mavra; she ruled the bedchamber and the nursery and the kitchen; all else was subject to the autocratic rule of Anika. Yet her field of activity was large enough: in twenty years she bore her husband eight children. Even if there had been cinemas in Solvychegodsk, she would scarcely have had time to go to them.

In those years Anika engaged a personal physician; he is said to have been "a German, doctor and apothecary." Anika brought the doctor with him from Kola, where many foreigners went for the fur trade. The "doctor and apothecary" naturally did not confine himself to curing the colds and righting the pampered stomachs of Anika's scions—he could have done work of that kind equally well in Germany. He strolled about the surroundings, and learned to his surprise that there were pearls in the cold rivers. The day the "doctor" heard this, he disappeared. In imagination he saw warmly gleaming, pink-white, precious round pearls lying on soft wadding—a dazzling vision. Soon, however, he discovered that the pearl treasure of the Iksa river was not fitted for the wadding of his dream-casket. But they were genuine pearls, though small and irregular, and the demand for them was great.

When the German returned after three days' absence, Anika merely smiled. "If you had talked to me about them," he said, "I would have shown you the pearls." He opened an oaken chest and brought out a little bag. Sparkling little stones of many colours rolled out. "I am collecting them," he continued, "for the frame of a saint's picture. But not many are brought to me.

"I see you are a connoisseur; do you care to make a business of it?"

Soon a regular working of the Iksa for pearls was in operation. The doctor was appointed manager, with additional pay; Anika selected the best pearls for his saint's ikon, and the rest he sent to Moscow.

The lean youngster "with no distinguishing features" had grown into a powerful man. The hair of his head was dark brown, but his beard was completely black. From beneath brows that met there looked out clear, bright, penetrating eyes.

In his residence his name was never spoken. "His Highness has given the order," said the household staff. "His Highness" was everywhere and knew everything. He was a stern master. So long as he had old employees taken over from his father he confined himself to reprimands; but when these older men migrated to another world and entered the service of the Almighty, Anika began administering corporal correction to their successors. The lower menials were sometimes actually whipped. Anika was not cruel, only stern. He never gave two punishments for a single offence. If the culprit had been beaten he could go back at once to his existing job. Why else should he have been beaten? Beatings are educative: "A man who has been beaten is worth two who haven't," said Anika. If he had made up his mind to discharge an offender, the man was not touched.

Anika was dry and matter-of-fact and industrious, and at the same time a giant among men. These qualities were so rare in Russia at that time that a regular series of legends grew round him. That he was a capitalist, working to make money and making money to widen his sphere of work—this was more than the ordinary folk could comprehend. There are many legends about the fantastic treasure Anika was supposed to have had buried with him in the Stroganov tumulus. In reality he left little treasure at his death. In his will all there was was listed—silver goblets, gold jewellery, precious ikons, embroidered cloths. Any prosperous boyar in Moscow could show as much. But the enterprises Anika left were beyond price. He left them all in full activity. The whole of his capital was in employment. Gold was to be found only on his ikons, but even there it brought in interest—payable in a better world.

Anika did not confine his enterprise to salt. He continued to expand his interests, and sent his sons in various directions on trading ventures. But he always devoted his principal attention to Moscow. He sent thither, via Ustyug, all possible goods from the north. From the Pechora estuary fishermen brought him caviare, salted, smoked, and frozen pike, salmon, char, blue char—delicacies that melted in the mouth like butter, rich as

amber, strong as pickles, soft as the northern skies. From the remote tundra men brought him reindeer hides, from the near-by forests feathers and down for sinners and wax for saints.

These were important articles of commerce, but more important than all of them put together were the furs. Anika went himself to Moscow with the furs. Ordinary folk cannot afford sable or beaver; his customers belonged to high society. The magnificence of the boyars did not intimidate him. If one of these great lords came with his following, Anika bowed low to him and thanked him for the great honour of the visit, but his eyes played over him as keenly as an executioner's: the boyar's "raccoon" fur had barked when it was alive; his caftan was lined with cheap material. The boyar had his nose in the air, he touched the goods with his fat fingers in lofty indifference; but he got no credit: Anika bowed low and indicated that his terms were cash down.

Yet, where there was good reason for it, Anika could give without either payment or promise of payment. "Why not do a service to a valued friend?" Sometimes he had possession of a batch of furs he happened to have received "for next to nothing": why waste words over its disposal? Wealthy and open-handed, he had many things to offer on occasion. He complimented the Tsar's chef with a barrel of caviare and a sterlet six feet long; to the treasurer he gave a fox's fur and to his wife a comforter of squirrel; to the major-domo at the court a beaver cap, to his wife an ermine stole, to his daughter a pearl necklace, to his mother-in-law a dried pike.

He was cheery, talkative, and entirely unpretentious—even a little innocent. He was fond of giving hospitality, and generous with his money. "Count your incomings, forget your outgoings" was his principle.

When this worthy provincial left Moscow for home, he had beneath his heavy bearskin cloak and fox caftan a written order from the "Tsar and Lord of all the Russians" for the supply of forty sables at prices from seven to thirteen roubles, and for as many other precious furs as he could collect; in addition, for five poods of down for the pillows and feather-beds of the Tsar's family, "all to be procured as quickly as possible; and if money is not to hand for purchase the same is to be reported, whereupon the requisite sums will be transmitted forthwith."

Anika's money was to hand. He supplied forty sables at an average price of ten roubles, a dozen special furs at twenty roubles apiece, two hundred roubles' worth of down—in all, eight hundred and forty roubles. This at a time when an average salt-works with site and appurtenances cost fifteen to twenty roubles. Anika's net profit from this deal amounted to not less than five hundred roubles. "Eat and drink, boyar; forget what it costs."

He soon became a regular contractor to the Tsar's court. Whatever might be wanted at court, Anika procured it. Was this bright-eyed peasant a magician? the boyars asked in astonishment. What, indeed, was there not in his great warehouse by the Vycheгда? It was no longer possible to get on without him. If the Tsar wanted to send a present to his "beloved brother" Emperor Maximilian, or to his "beloved sister" Queen Elizabeth, Anika dispatched precious furs. If the couch was too hard for Tsar Ivan's fifth, sixth, or seventh spouse, Anika dispatched down. If the Tsar was going hunting, Anika sent falcons; if the Tsar wanted amusement, Anika sent bears. All these quite apart from fish or fowl for the Tsar's table.

All this was perfectly natural, but what bordered on magic was the way things were brought from beyond the seas, things that simply did not exist by the Vycheгда. He sent Italian wines to Moscow for the Tsar's table! The wine was urgently needed, for a special pronouncement of an Orthodox Church Council had laid down that it was unseemly to drink vodka, but that this did not apply to "Italian grape wine" or to other foreign wines; for "nowhere is it written that such wines may not be drunk; these wines may be drunk to the glory of God."

This ordinance is quoted in an old book to prove how "hypocritical" and "dissolute" the Orthodox church was. At that time there were no vineyard areas anywhere in Muscovy, no areas where grapes ripened. Thus, in prohibiting the drinking of vodka, but only of vodka, the church cut off the whole population of Russia from alcohol with the exception of the fortunate few who were in a position to buy foreign wines. How many of these were there in Moscow? It may, incidentally, be observed that grape wine has always and everywhere enjoyed the protection of the Christian church.

But how did Anika procure the foreign wines? With his furs and his salt. At this time he was sending his salt not only to every Russian town but to Lithuania, and Lithuania meant Europe. For his furs he secured foreign goods at the fair at Kola.

Anika equipped an expedition of ten men and sent them across the Urals to the Ugrian region, of which, of course, he knew by hearsay. Anika's men did no harm to anyone on their journey, and nobody did harm to them. They returned laden with furs.

Next year he sent out another expedition. He furnished it with yet more goods. According to Dutchmen then in Russia, the goods were mainly cheap rubbish—little bells, worthless ornaments, and the like, suggested by his "boundless acquisitiveness." The Dutchmen were very sensitive on the point of "acquisitiveness"; they themselves, as everyone knew, had come to Moscow

only from idealistic motives, and when they bought sables for six roubles apiece in Moscow and sold them in Amsterdam for the equivalent of fifty, they handed over the difference at once, of course, to the Muscovites.

Anika now sent out an expedition every year. He required his representatives to investigate everything and to ferret out wherever they went the sort of men that lived there, the manner of their life, and the sort of roads that existed. He collected information as well as furs, and how well he profited from both was soon apparent. A splendid stone church was built in Solvychegodsk—virtually built by his sables and ermines.

The sables played their part also in the growth of the salt industry. Anika continually extended his salt-works out of his trading profits. He was overwhelmed with business, so that he could no longer attend himself to every detail. Three sons helped him in the work. His first wife, the quiet, subdued Mavra, had died. She had borne and brought up eight children, had travelled with him along the first, hard part of the road, had never rested, never slackened, never grumbled—and had departed. How could Anika live without a mistress of the house? He was not yet old: he was in his fifty-first year. In the view of the marriage-brokeresses of Solvychegodsk he was a man “in full sap.”

Sophia was twenty years younger than he. She brought Anika no dowry; he said he was in search of good character and firmness in the true faith; it may be that he was in search of something else of which he said nothing. Sophia was young and carefree; older people go cautiously to work and look suspiciously about them. When Sophia entered his home, Anika immediately sent his only unmarried son, Semyon, to his most distant salt-works.

Sophia led a different life from Mavra's. She had young girls with her as serving-maids; the cares of the household she left to an old aunt; she herself spent most of her time sitting before a mirror of German make, nibbling gingerbread and trying on embroidered shawls and brocade collars. Clearly she had an uncommon measure of good sense, for Anika always agreed with her. Perhaps, however, this reasoning is not sound, for the old man always did agree with other people, but then he proceeded to do as he thought fit.

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There were endless business openings, in steadily widening regions. The expeditions across the Urals proved an inexhaustible source of profit. They followed in the footsteps of Saint Stephen—from the Vychedga to the Vym, thence to the Pechora and by its tributaries through the “Iron Gate” into the land of the Ugrians. Anika's representatives knew the Ugrian dialects, and

he also had Ugrians in his service. He kept himself closely informed about everything.

Tales spread in Moscow of his stores of furs, his secret connexions with unknown princes, who supplied him with furs from a vast gloomy country he had subjugated, a country of which he kept the secret from Moscow. The name of this country began to emerge—Mangaseya. Its origin is unknown: it may have come from "Mokaseya," the name of a mythical ruler, or from "Mokasse," the name of an ancient trans-Ural tribe. Whatever its origin, the new name created a legend and stimulated the imagination—an incomprehensible word and so not a mere invention: the land had a name, and consequently it existed!

There lived the Mangaseyans. They lived on reindeer meat and fish, and sometimes on one another's flesh; hence they were called Samoyeds or eaters one of another—cannibals. The name Samoyed is clearly of Finnish origin and has not in reality any derogatory meaning, but to the Russians it immediately suggested anthropophagy. The Muscovites added that the Samoyeds were short and flat-faced, with short noses, that they were great runners and skilled with bow and arrow, and that they drove their sleighs with reindeer or teams of dogs. If a guest arrived they would roast one of their own children on a spit to make a meal; if the guest fell ill of the meal and died, they did not bury him but ate him in turn; they also ate their dead. At this their hearers would shudder. "Horrible! Is it really possible that such things should be?"

"Why not?" retorted the narrator, confident in his veracity. "They are not Christians." Carried away by his story, he would continue:

"That is not all! Far beyond the Great Rock, for instance, there is a race of men who do not live on the land in summer but in the sea, for on land the sun would burst their bodies; so they lie in the water throughout the hot month. And then there is a race with their mouth on top of their head; they cannot talk. There are others who crouch on the earth in winter and freeze, so that they need no food for the whole winter; in spring they thaw and return to life. They eat the flesh of sables, and clothe themselves in huge black sable skins. And there are yet others who have no heads at all, and no possessions."

It was easy to understand that headless people should have no possessions. That race was plainly of no worth: it lived underground, and only occasionally crawled up to the light of day. These men had been seen on the banks of the Ob; they were driven along by an ancient with an iron staff.

There were other races too. They kept herds of sables for food; they milked the arctic foxes like cows, and the polar bears

went fishing for them and brought along the catch themselves. Thick white clouds sailed across the sky in that region, and dropped down, down to the ground, and then little squirrels and fawns hopped out of them and ran off.

All these ethnological and zoological details were of little interest to Anika. But when the narrators went on to describe how Anika Stroganov had subjugated all these Samoyed races and imposed payments of tribute on them, he began to think that his secretiveness might give offence in Moscow. Accordingly he went with his sons to the capital in 1557, made deep obeisances to the Tsar as was due, and offered him costly presents; moreover, and this was the main thing, he gave a full report on Mangaseya.

The old man, a familiar and respected figure, was warmly received. His bright, keen eyes peered out of the silver framework of his hair like those of a saint from an ikon. The Metropolitan of Moscow was among his friends; Anika had never stinted his gifts to the church; and the Tsar himself recognized Anika's theological knowledge. The booksellers in Moscow, too, knew that Anika would pay any price for a finely illuminated "sacred" book. In this way he had accumulated a library of two hundred and six of the rarest and most precious volumes.

But it would be quite impossible to represent Anika as a saint. He only looked like the picture of one. At home his young employees went about groaning under his rule, and the pretty Sophia bore him one child after another. Ten great salt-works worked day and night for him. Waggons piled with all sorts of goods creaked along the roads, and heavily laden barges sailed low in the water. At this time Anika had over six hundred workers and employees. And the number of other men working for him could have been revealed only by the forests and the rivers and the tundra. Yet others were travelling afield, searching for still farther regions into which Anika could stretch out his long, strong, muscular arm.

The Tsar was well satisfied with his talk with Anika. "He conceals nothing from me, he holds nothing back, he comes himself to me, he is not like the others." It was a welcome opportunity for the Tsar to indulge in a little self-pity, to grow sentimental, to weep a little. He was so lonely, so misunderstood! Could anyone grudge him the little relaxation he gained now and then from a bit of torturing and a few hangings?

Anika gave a carefully considered report to the Tsar on Mangaseya. He said that it was difficult as yet to seize the country, and that by quiet and peaceful means he would be able to get the Tsar more furs than the voyevods with their noisy and stupid shooting. He told the Tsar of the nature of the journey thither—through regions in which no animal is to be seen on the earth

and no bird in the air, and across a gigantic range of mountains where one of his emissaries climbed for sixteen days and still had not reached the summit.

"You cannot take possession of this country of Mangaseya, Tsar, until you open another route to it. That route must lead through the country of Perm. There the land is empty and desert; it has no inhabitants. Give me that country."

Anika spoke convincingly. He had an unhesitating answer for every question. His gaze had the firmness of sincerity. He did not conceal what it was that tempted him in the country of Perm. There was virgin soil there. There was salt. Corn could be sown there. There were ores. All these things Anika needed for his enterprises. It was costing him too much to feed his workers on imported grain. He needed iron for his salt-making works, and he had none. There was no continuous waterway from Solvychegodsk to Moscow, so that salt had to be transferred from barges to waggons and then loaded again into barges. By the time it reached Moscow, half had been lost on the way or spoiled by damp, and the cost had been trebled. And almost every year Moscow suffered from a dearth of salt. Meanwhile that country was lying fallow!

Thus spake Anika before the Tsar. He thought he was making a deal; he did not know that he was making history. He was the first to arouse Moscow's interest in real earnest in Siberia. He revealed the economic importance of Mangaseya. He showed the necessity of a more convenient means of approach to the country, farther to the south. His proposal was simply the colonization of the Perm region, and he offered to take the leadership in that task.

Never in all the history of Russia was a programme brought forward that was more far-sighted, more sound and sensible, and more "imperial." Few colonial enterprises in any country have been based on such boldly conceived and truly creative ideas, and so magnificently carried out.

Ivan approved Anika's ideas. His immediate advisers stroked their beards, snuggled into their caftans with Anika's sable trimmings, and agreed with the Tsar.

But the Tsar placed implicit trust in no man: the matter must be given further examination. He demanded evidence from a living witness that in the great region of Perm by the Kama there were indeed uninhabited wildernesses.

Was it likely that there would be many people from those wildernesses to be found in Moscow? Nobody lives in uninhabited country. By good fortune, however, there was a man in the city, half Russian and half Permian, who had been in those regions.



The man had the doubtful name of Kadaul and seemed altogether a rather doubtful character. The one thing about him that was beyond doubt was the roubles of Anika's in his pocket. Perm, he said, was a country of great rivers and empty spaces, with dark bluish forests in which the tree-tops reached the clouds. The bears cried with human voices. He had only been there once, and never would he go again. Anika had risked his head in bringing this man forward, but all went well. He had diddled Ivan the Terrible as men diddle a Finnish simpleton at a fair. Oh, those honest eyes!

A year later Grigori, Anika's eldest son, was handed a document from the Tsar; it was sealed with a huge red seal. That meant that it contained good news. Such documents, when they were sealed in black, usually meant in Moscow that there would be a mass to read for the dead, but a red seal called for devout thanksgivings. Under this charter, dated April 4, 1558, all uncultivated land along the banks of the tributaries of the Kama "from their mouths to their sources"—on the banks of the Imva, the Obva, the Yaiva, the Ussolka, the Kosva—was conveyed to Grigori Stroganov for a period of twenty years. Grigori was permitted to build towns in these regions, to maintain armed guards, and to make cannon. Grigori was authorized to till the earth in these regions, to set up salt-making works and to make salt, to catch fish in the rivers and lakes, and to prospect for ores. But if he found silver, copper, or tin he was to report it at once to Moscow, and was not to smelt the ores himself. Anika had already been granted the right to extract and smelt iron ores.

Again and again in the charter it was pointed out that the Stroganovs had the right to settle these wildernesses, but not with runaway serfs; they were also strictly forbidden to admit and allow to settle any thieves and vagabonds who had evaded military service, or boyars' sons who had absconded from the service of the State—or "the charter will be a charter no longer."

For a term of twenty years the Stroganovs and their kinsmen were exempt from all taxes and dues in those new territories, and from every sort of statutory obligation. They were authorized to trade with foreign merchants, free of all Customs duty. If envoys of the Tsar passed through their territory to Siberia or back from there, or to other regions, the Stroganovs were not required to supply them with food or horses without payment, but all services rendered must be paid for in full, and finally, to crown these privileges of the Stroganovs, they and their men were to be free from all subordination to the local authorities, and subject only to the jurisdiction of the Tsar's court of justice in Moscow.

All this, taken together, amounted to the constitution of a new

State set up on the border of Muscovy, between that kingdom and unknown Siberia. The Stroganovs had secured the right to form an army of their own and a court of justice of their own, and exemption from taxes and trade dues, an exemption that implied the right to impose taxes and dues for their own purposes. Great was the advantage of the simple exemption from transport obligations. These were at all times a serious problem in Russia. The Government was merciless in requiring the population to provide for the transport of its officials, of the post, and at times of whole companies of soldiers. Couriers rushed hither and thither on business of State, or, indeed, without it, and were a crushing burden on the peasants. The roads grew longer and longer, and the stages for man and horse shorter and shorter.

There had been similar grants of "wildernesses" in the past, and more were to follow. But never had such extensive rights been granted to a single individual. It was realized at the Kremlin that Anika had put forward a proposal of unprecedented importance. In this respect the little phrase concerning envoys proceeding "to Siberia or back from there" is significant. All the lands north of the Volga and Kama as far as the Arctic Ocean had passed in fact or nominally into the hands of the Tsar of Russia. All this was his Novgorodian heritage. One after another, separate fragments of the Tatar possessions were added to it. Five years before Anika's fateful talk with Ivan, the realm of Kazan had been finally subjugated. Three years before that, Astrakhan had fallen. The whole basin of the Volga was in Russian hands, and Muscovy had been extended close up to the Urals.

Siberian rulers had acted accordingly. Two years before the "talk," the first envoys from Siberia had appeared before the Tsar. They brought him gifts, presented a greeting from their sultan Etiger, complimented the Tsar on the conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan, and expressed the desire that the Tsar would "guarantee the peace and security of their country." They offered, in other words, candid and peaceful neighbourliness, and proposed a sort of non-aggression pact.

Ivan felt very flattered. He graciously accepted the presents of sable and squirrel furs, though he felt that they might have been finer: he was used to receiving better things from Anika. But that was of no particular importance. The thing that mattered was the envoys' acceptance of Moscow's proposal that these presents should be brought every year on a fixed scale—a thousand sables and a thousand squirrel-skins. This was tribute, and after this the Tsar added one more to his many titles, that of "Commander of all Siberia." He used this title in a missive addressed to King Edward VI of England.

If the truth be told, this title was taken a little prematurely. But that was natural. A little later Charles II of England called himself ruler of Canada, though he possessed far less of that country than Ivan did of Siberia. It should be mentioned that at that time regions west of the Urals were included in "Siberia"; Mangaseya was Siberia, and so also was the Ugrian land, whose petty princes had sworn allegiance to Ivan III, the grandfather of Ivan the Terrible. Now, however, tribute was coming from the true Siberia, where the Tatars and Nogaiers and "Mungals" (Mongols) lived.

It was at that point that Anika appeared before the Tsar. At the right moment the right man was on the spot. He had brought harness with him and rode away, as he had intended, on horseback. He took back with him only a bit of paper. In return for it he had made Russia the gift of Siberia.

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In 1558 Anika was seventy years old. That explains why the charter was drawn up in the name of his son. Of the thirteen children his two wives had borne him, five had died in childhood: the doctor and apothecary had found the battle with smallpox and scarlet fever and diphtheria a far more difficult task than diving for pearls in the Iksa. Of the eight surviving children only three were sons—Grigori, Yakov, and Semyon, children of Mavra, Anika's first wife. Semyon was still young. The two elder sons were both married and prosperous merchants; they had already travelled all over Russia, and some of their business dealings and methods had left the old man speechless.

"You boys are going ahead too fast altogether," he said. "You are trying to skin the ox twice over. You want to dance at three weddings at once and to spoon out honey with a ladle!"

The "boys"—they were men nearing the fifties—smiled. Our old chap is a great man, they thought, clever and shrewd, but he is behind the times now. He is sentimental and always talking about God.

But they were wrong. The old chap was a bigger man than they thought. He was like a mountain on which they lived but whose height above sea-level they were incapable of measuring.

The land conveyed to Grigori extended to more than two million dessiatines—nearly six million acres. The "wildernesses" were covered with primeval forests, through which deep rivers ran. The subsoil contained ores and salt. In the forests lived beasts and birds, and the rivers were crammed with fish. On the edges of the forests, by the river-banks, in spacious glades, and even in the forest, lived men. There were already small Russian settlements among them, nuclei for colonization, and "her-

mitages"—little independent monasteries, in which men sought to save their souls from sin and their bodies from the kindly attentions of the Tsar. Finally, there were whole villages of native races—Permians, Ostyaks, Zyryans, Cheremisses, Mordvins.

All this Anika knew just as well as his chief witness, Kadaul, did. The ores had still to be located. But Anika had precise knowledge of the salt deposits and no less precise information about the settlements. Only the cruel simpleton on the throne could imagine it to be possible in twenty years to settle and develop a territory of six million acres by means of immigrants alone. When Grigori had read the charter he looked up in astonishment at his father. "No natives, no refugees, no deserters, no thieves or vagabonds, no taxpayers, no sons of boysars—"

Cautiously he rolled up the charter, so as not to damage the seal. "Whom are we permitted to take? Independent men, free peasants? But if a man is free and has his own farm, why should he go there? If we could take the souls of innocent men who have been executed, then we could clear the forests and plough the land."

"Sh-sh!" said the old man with a wink, "the Tsar knows what he is doing." He stowed away the charter in the sacrosanct deed-trunk. "And," he muttered in his beard, "so do I."

He was seventy, with the wisdom of old age and an old man's affections, a setting sun. Had not the time come to rest? He had done his full share, and now the time had surely come for the old captain to content himself with giving general directions. Let his sons go out to talk to the Mordvins and diddle the Tsar.

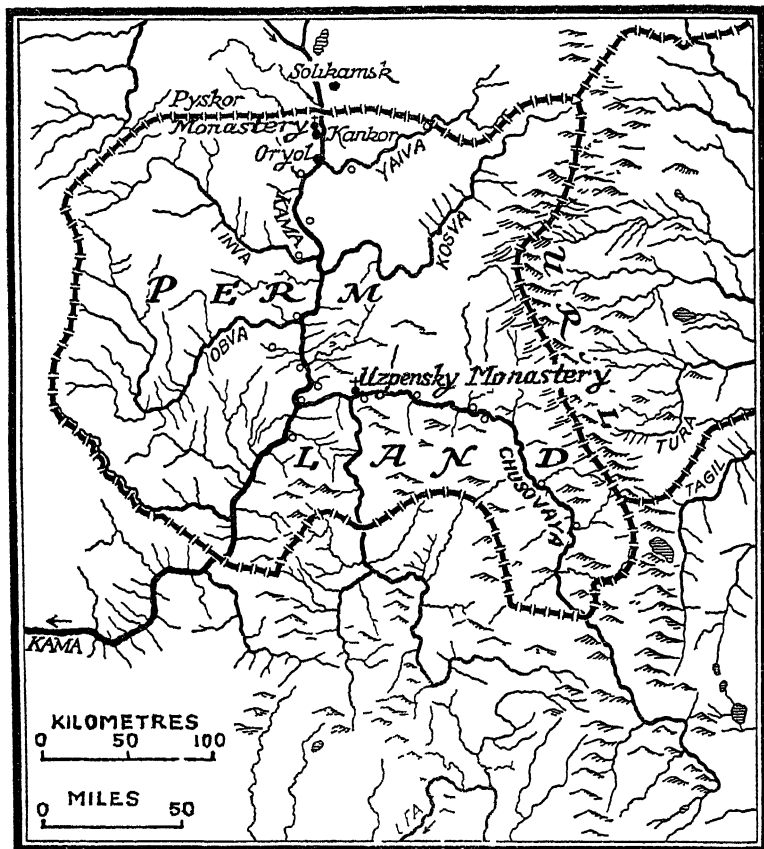
No, thought Anika. How can I send out the boys, chattering young hotheads?

Two of these young hotheads were a hundred years old between them. And they knew their way about the business just as well as the old man himself. Only they were in much too much of a hurry, and far too acquisitive. These two pikes, thought the old man, are frightening off all the little fishes.

A year passed; then "His Highness" moved with his two eldest sons into the land of Perm. Semyon, the youngest, remained at Solvychegodsk to carry on the business there. Along the Kama the axes resounded and the forests blazed up. Anika had brought with him a whole troop of men. They were not armed with guns but with saws, axes, and ploughshares. Anika rolled up his sleeves and took an axe. Now then—who could do as well as the old man?

At a safe spot, where the little river Kankora flowed into the Kama, the little village of Kankor was built; it became Anika's headquarters. The village—it has disappeared—was the starting-point for all the other towns in the country of Perm. All the

others were of later origin; Perm itself, the chief city of the region, was founded under Peter the Great, round a farmhouse which one of the Stroganov farmers had built for himself. In Anika's time the only town was his own place of residence, Kankor. It was quickly surrounded by salt-making works. Houses were built for his staff. Storehouses were erected. Barges lay by the river-side. At the same time that the building



THE STROGANOV'S POSSESSIONS IN PERM AND IN SIBERIA  
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

of the town was begun, Anika laid the foundation stone, close by, of a monastery. It was officially consecrated to Tsar Ivan, and the monks were required to pray for that gracious monarch. But in building the monastery the old man was thinking of his own needs: he was building his last home on earth.

This tireless pioneer work continued for a further eight years. In those years Anika grew into a true patriarch. His power and

influence were unbounded. His realm grew unceasingly before his eyes. His trading turnover grew to fabulous dimensions. His salt was literally on every plate in Russia, from Smolensk to Kazan. On his salt imports into Moscow alone, Anika paid the Tsar twenty-three thousand roubles a year in Customs duty, according to Dutch observers. The figure is improbable and clearly exaggerated, like the other foreign tales of Anika's millions. But these tales show how great was Anika's reputation: it was that of a Russian Rockefeller or Rothschild. The name Stroganov connoted fantastic wealth, and everyone mentioned whatever figure came into his head: accuracy was of no importance.

Anika soon made use of the permission granted in his charter to smelt iron. The ore was discovered. He secured special permission to erect blast furnaces and to cut down forests to feed them. The ore was extracted from marshlands, and at first it was worked in primitive fashion, with hand-worked blowers. But soon there appeared in these regions representatives of an English concessionaire, Thomas Randolph, and foundries were introduced. Anika was commissioned to supervise their working in the interest of the State finances. He carried out the supervision, and so learned how to erect blast furnaces of the English pattern.

By this time no one in Anika's employment remembered any longer the provision "no refugees, no thieves or vagabonds" in the Tsar's charter. Least of all did his sons recall it. They worked with burning energy. They built and explored. Grigori searched especially for ores. He found iron for himself, but no copper for the Tsar, though he walked over it in dozens of places. His methods were too primitive and his knowledge too scanty for its discovery. He could not know that eighty years later the first copper foundry in Russia was to be opened on the site of Kankor.

Grigori was not to be deterred by ill-success. He sent his agents into regions in which foreign captives were living—Swedes, Livonians, Germans. Did any of these know about prospecting for ores? Experts were sought, but not found at once. No matter—where Grigori failed his son would succeed.

With his brother he searched also for salt. There was plenty in his immediate neighbourhood. But what was wanted was salt that could be easily extracted, salt that "lay well." Round here it took no notice of the boundaries that had been defined by the Tsar's hand. They must go farther away. Farther to the east, nearer to the Urals.

Anika was content with his sons. The "boys" were ready to listen, they were getting more sensible. Only they had no compassion for the old man; they sent him once more to Moscow. He groaned, but made his preparations—looked out this and that for his old Moscow friends, took a bit more in case he should find

new ones. He thought of the Tsar, but did not overlook the Metropolitan, or the trusted boyars, or their wives, or their clerks.

He brought little presents home with him. For his wife there was a piece of cloth from Bokhara, and for the grandchildren toys from Germany. For one of the staff there would be cloth, for another a silk shirt. For himself he had brought a few choice morsels for his library—the Works of Dionysius Areopagita and the Teachings of Athanasius of Antioch—parchment codices. There was no need to read them, it was sufficient to look at them, with the handwriting black as monks—God’s warriors—and the capital letters richly ornamented as the Metropolitan in full robes!

He brought back a present also for his two “boys”—a million and a half dessiatines of new territory. They were stuck in his breast, rolled up in the Tsar’s charter. How pleased the boys would be with the new toy!

They might well be. They had long been playing a new game that takes up a lot of room. They had been building towns and works, ports and fortresses. These required lots of tin soldiers and lead peasants. Their voices sounded far along Kama and Volga and Oka, right away to the Don. All manner of men heard and answered. Not to everyone did they show the Tsar’s charter, and not everyone asked to see it. Here they themselves were Tsars. They asked no questions of the new arrivals: every new guest came from God. Men streamed to join them, to work in the new free centres where every man began a new life, even if he had tasted an earlier one to the dregs. In former days men had departed in haste toward Moscow from these regions, away from the Tatars and the tribal chiefs; now they hastened from Moscow to these lands beyond the Kama. The day was to come when they would haste across the Urals. “Russia, Russia, whither art thou speeding?” asked Gogol three centuries later.

Thieves and honest men, brigands and men of peace, murderers and missionaries—all streamed across the Kama to Grigori and Yakov. It was not to be wondered at: the brothers promised “to industry its fruits and to daring its spoils,” as an old historian put it. Everyone found work there at his trade, even the man who lived by others’ work.

And, of course, if any poor tribes dwelt already in these regions it was not in order that Anika’s sons should simply greet them and pass on, waiting for the arrival of settlers from Don and Volga. There was no time to lose; it was not the men that were wanted but their work. The country belonged thenceforth to the Stroganovs, and they disposed of it. If a site was needed for salt-works, the Mordvin or Permian must evacuate it. If a hereditament required ploughing up, the Cheremiss lost his

pasturage. And, of course, all that these natives reaped from their own soil they must share in future with the new lords.

Not that the Stroganovs were mere highwaymen. They destroyed no man's livelihood, and took no man's possessions, without solid reasons. Especially so long as Anika still lived, the principle was observed which the Ugrian expedition had taught him—more can be got by kindness than by force. To rob men of everything was to lose the men. And without men no new lands could be worked.

Humanity was a tradition with the Stroganovs, and even the energetic "boys" did not depart from it. But they had sense. And it was only sense that a certain "proletarianization" of the native populations, within reasonable limits, should be in the direct interest of the Stroganovs' enterprise.

The natives did not properly understand this. They thought the wicked Russians were simply driving them from their settlements, and were exacting from them on some pretext a share of their already meagre crops; the intruders heaped scorn on the natives' religion, and regarded the natives themselves as vermin they would not touch—except their daughters. Not every Russian huntsman returned from the hunt. Fishermen went to haul in the nets they had laid, and found neither catch nor nets. Fields were burnt before the crops had been reaped.

It was particularly troublesome to find that the natives had tribal connexions beyond the Stroganovs' borders. That added to their strength. And beyond the borders there even started a political agitation. In that region there were still fragments of the great Mongol Empire, Nogai Tatars and some petty Vogule princes. These people sent into Siberia reports of the Stroganov enterprises that were anything but friendly.

Worst of all, these savages were by no means all hundred-percent. savages. Among them were men who realized the situation and had energy and initiative; otherwise it would have been difficult to explain how it was that they succeeded several times in sending envoys with written complaints to Moscow. It was perhaps more difficult to get past Grigori and Yakov than through the "copper gate" which Alexander the Great had bolted and barred.

But how could the poor heathens do battle in a Moscow of true believers against those brothers, at whose backs stood "His Highness," the friend of the Tsar and of the Metropolitan?

Anika met these complaints with yet more serious complaints of his own. He reported perpetual outrages, cattle-driving, murders. At the same time he told of the tireless explorations carried on by his "boys" in honour of the Tsar: they had not as yet found either silver or copper, but they had reliable information that both were to be found farther away, in the Urals.



It might well be that they would already have found them if the "pack of thieves and traitors," the Cheremisses and Vogules and Tatars, had not continually interrupted their search. His son Yakov had already discovered fresh sources of brine in new wastes. This was farther east, along the river Chusovaya; the land was owned by nobody; there was nothing there but black forests, wild rivers, and desert islands.

The envoys trotted homewards with their unread impeachments, over the rutted roads of March. The legal situation had been explained to them. They were told that they must not come snivelling to Moscow any more: little things were bound to go wrong here and there in a vast industrial undertaking, and they must bring their complaints before their masters, the Stroganovs.

Anika and his son Yakov hurried back home before the thaw, in their warm, covered sleigh. This sleigh is still to be seen and admired in the city museum at Solvychevodsk. It is of no great size, and not particularly luxurious by our standards; a third-class railway ticket takes us along with a good deal more comfort nowadays. But there was at all events room for father and son in their heavy furs, and for the further million and a quarter dessiatines they took back with them.

Far away from the petitioners and from Anika lay, where it belonged, the river Chusovaya. It twisted its tail round the Urals and stuck its head into the Kama; it lay grim but impotent in its blue strait-jacket of thick ice. Along its two banks, covered with dark forest and deep snow, lay Yakov's dessiatines. Anika knew that the two brothers were on friendly terms; but he also knew their acquisitiveness, and Grigori had received enough already. It would not do to irritate Yakov, especially as it was he who had discovered and explored the new land.

But the Chusovaya creaked along the whole length of its great backbone, and struggled to get free from its strait-jacket. Its new lords had scarcely reached their river when it burst its bonds. Now Yakov had a whole sea of his own.

Contentedly he returned to Kankor. But Anika was not interested in contentment. He had carried off his last stroke, with all the old power and the old sureness of aim. His words had fallen like the blows of an axe on a tree-trunk. But his heart was heavy and his interest in the world seemed to be fading. He had not wasted many words over the burial of Sophia before his journey to Moscow. In the evening of her life she had been the mother of an enormous family, a grandmother and the wife of "His Highness"—and herself "Her Highness"; she had become very pious and very fat—perhaps from all the honeycakes? Her legs had swollen, and she suffered from breathlessness. Yakov had tried to cure her with herbs.

Seventy-eight years of age. A distant bell called to evening prayer. Why did all go suddenly dark before his eyes one brilliantly sunlit day? In Moscow a merchant from Bokhara had brought him silken cloths—"We know your boyarin likes them."

The sons realized their father's condition. They did not disturb him with business questions. There was no reason why they should—they held all the strings in their hands, discussed matters with one another, and only asked their father for "his blessing" out of respect. When the spring floods subsided, two carriages came one day to the house. The old man had made up his mind to go to see his youngest son Semyon, but had forgotten to mention it to the two elder sons.

Semyon was really a "boy" still, only thirty years of age. He worked just like the two others, at full pressure. At night the old man could not sleep. He wandered to and fro, to and fro, through his house. The old boards creaked of the past, the forgotten, the unimportant.

Three months later the old man returned to the Kama, though not to a town: he entered his monastery, taking the hood as the monk Yoasaph. He lived two years in the monastery, obeying all the rules of the order, and never missing a mass.

Then suddenly he grew restless. He went once more to Semyon at Solvychevodsk. One morning the young monk attending him came into his room to find what had been Anika sitting in the armchair, with the silvery-white head resting on the waxen hand. On the knees lay a map of the land of Perm. Round it flowed the Kama in a mighty arc. The greedy Chusovaya clung fast to it. With their spidery arms the two rivers clasped the "waste lands" round Anika's tumulus.

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THE SONS

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ANIKA could die in peace, for he had done his part. He had in very truth indicated "the course"—for three centuries the ship pursued it.

Anika's imposing, biblical personality was distributed between his three sons: each of them inherited a sufficient share of it. They were of the same stuff, but no longer patriarchs—their father had ended that succession. They were drier and rougher. Grigori, the eldest, had inherited his father's love of book-learning. Yakov was a huntsman, a physician, and a collector of herbs and medicaments. Semyon, the youngest, was a connoisseur of ikons and a patron of painters. The famous "Stroganov school" of fine Russian ikon-painting dates back to him. But in business deals, as extant records show, he was just as keen as the young Anika had been.

It was in the father's time that at Moscow, when Yakov was there, there was committed the worst of all the crimes under Ivan's rule: the Tsar killed his own son. He struck him with a stick during a quarrel; the stick was iron-shod. Boris Godunov, who had been present, had tried to hold' back the Tsar and had himself been struck. After the deed the Tsar, as always, gave himself up to wild remorse. Day and night he lay prone in the chapel like the penitent Magdalen. Godunov lay in bed recovering from his wounds. His physician was a man "experienced in the healing of injuries," Yakov Stroganov.

Godunov was of Tatar origin. He was keenly interested in all things connected with the East. Yakov's stories stimulated this interest. Godunov interested the Tsar, and a special section for Siberian affairs was opened in the imperial Administration. Godunov frequently inspected its records. His friendship with Yakov was thus fateful: later, when Godunov became Tsar, the Russian penetration of Siberia gained a new impulse. The first maps of Siberia were then made, by Godunov's command. One of them was made by his own son.

The incense was still hanging over the burial-place of Ivan's son when the Tsar pursued another victim. He was told that Boris Godunov was in hiding and was hatching a conspiracy. The Tsar came unannounced to Godunov's house. To Ivan's angry questions Godunov answered that he was certainly not in hiding but was recovering from his wounds, and in proof of this he showed the Tsar Yakov's bandages.

The hysterical Tsar's mood changed at once. He embraced the sick man and was all graciousness again. He realized what was the cause of Boris's suffering. Proofs of favour rained down upon Godunov—and at the same time on Yakov Stroganov.

After Anika's death the brothers had quarrelled. Yakov and Grigori held together; Semyon stood out against them. The cause of the dispute is unknown; probably it arose out of questions of inheritance. Semyon probably wanted to have his share in the expansion of Perm, and not to be confined to the home salt-works.

The Tsar officiated personally as arbiter between the brothers. And it is easy to understand that, in view of Yakov's friendship with Godunov, the decision was in favour of Yakov and Grigori. Semyon was left entirely at the mercy of his brothers. They acted as true Stroganovs: they did not ruin Semyon, and did not expel him from his home. They only excluded him from Perm: he must stay at Solvychegodsk.

Expansion continued at a great pace. The brothers did not let the grass grow under their feet. They were so sure of Moscow's support that there was no need for them to hesitate. What mattered the frontiers assigned to their possessions in the map attached to the Tsar's charter when this map had as much relation to realities as a child's drawing to a living horse? According to the map they were required to stop at certain rivers and mountains which in reality were at entirely different places from those shown, in regions far from any the Stroganovs had yet reached. And the brothers did not stop there. How much they took in addition to the land they had been granted cannot be stated precisely. Two hundred years later, when real maps and not childish ones were compared with the original charters, the Government was dumbfounded. At the end of the eighteenth century the Russian Treasury proceeded against Anika's descendants for the recovery of the difference between what they had been granted and what they had taken. The difference amounted to 1,750,000 dessiatines!

Yes, indeed, Grigori and Yakov were sons of their father; yet they were different from him. When Anika died they bestowed regal presents on his beloved Pyskor monastery. They presented it, for masses for his soul, with all that lay round the monastery—salt-works, mills, granaries, fields, apiaries, fish preserves. The monastery chapel received golden crosses and incense-burners and goblets, and a precious Bible with saints' heads in many-coloured enamel on its gold binding. The monastery stood on the defended frontier the Stroganovs had set up by the Kama, a frontier that was extended later to the Chusovaya.

Far away on the Kola peninsula, on the tail that the "Scan-

dinavian tiger" drops into the White Sea, there was another monastery adjoining salt-works of the Stroganovs'. This monastery, too, was presented with the whole of the neighbouring salt-works, again for masses for the souls of the dead parents. Only, before conveying the salt-works to the monks, the brothers removed the most valuable part of the equipment, the salt-pans.

The brothers wanted, in fact, to have nothing to do with Kola. Their interests lay by the Kama. Their territory was growing and the number of their subjects increasing, but these subjects still refused to "understand." They hunted and fished and collected wild honey, stroked their gods or beat them, and amid all these occupations they failed to realize that their juridical situation had altered, and that by virtue of this alteration they were entitled in future to carry on these occupations only with the consent of the Stroganovs.

The lack of juridical knowledge in these tribes resulted in their defending their claims not by the letter of the law but with spears and arrows. As they were subjects of the Stroganovs, this defence was "rebellion." The Ostyaks were the most peaceful of tribute-payers. The Cheremisses, however, and the Tatars were unruly elements. The main cause of this was their relationship with no less unruly Siberian tribes, so that there developed a Siberian "irredenta."

The brothers were well aware of this. Immediately after Anika's death they had moved from Kankor. Ten miles away, farther down the Kama, they built a new fortified village, Oryol. They dug a moat round it and set up strong palisades. Behind these they placed cannon, and within the village they built "strong houses" for soldiers and "stone storehouses" for powder and stores.

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Tsar Ivan was immensely interested in Siberia. His counsellor Godunov was no less so. It will be remembered that, two years before Anika's historic talk with Ivan, the Siberian sultan Etiger made overtures to Moscow. He was told in reply that friendship was like a cloak and only gave warmth when it was lined with furs.

After that tribute did really come in, though irregularly. It was irregular because struggles for hegemony were going on in Siberia. Etiger was afraid of a war on two fronts; he was threatened from the south by Khan Kuchum. This khan had every reason for trying to eliminate Etiger, for with his horde he led a nomad life between the Aral Sea and the Caspian—in a region, that is to say, which roused in everyone living there the desire for migration to another region where there was less salt but more water. Juridically his claims to the Siberian throne were irreproachably established by his court historians. According to them Shibani,

the grandson of Genghis Khan and lord of Bokhara, had issue Batur Khan; Batur Khan had issue Chuchi Khan, Chuchi Khan Badakul, Badakul Menga-Timur Bekondi, Menga-Timur Bekondi Ali-Oglan, Ali-Oglan Hadjim Mahomet, Hadjim Mahomet Mamudak Murtasa, and this last Kuchum. Bearing in mind that Siberia belonged at least in part to Genghis Khan's realm, it must be admitted that Kuchum's rights to Siberia were incontestable.

Kuchum succeeded in enforcing them. He subjugated the Tatars along the middle course of the Tobol and the Ishim; he imposed tribute on the Ostyaks, Vogules, and Samoyeds by the lower Ob; he murdered Etiger, and settled in Etiger's capital city of Isker or Sibir, the remains of which lie ten miles from the Tobolsk of today.

Genghis Khan's descendant proclaimed himself Tsar of Siberia, imposed tribute on tribes of every tongue, and ruled in great luxury and pleasure and content. According to Herodotus, winged griffins guarded a golden hoard in Siberia, but Kuchum had no great store of gold: his wealth was in furs, carpets, and horses. Furs and carpets afforded comfort, horses sport and merriment, since they provided koumiss (mare's milk), which strengthens the body and also, after alcoholic fermentation, the spirit. Kuchum was a Mohammedan, but the Prophet did not prohibit alcohol in the form of koumiss.

Kuchum was famed for his prowess in obstacle-racing. This healthy sport suited his unspoilt physique. Stakes were driven into the ground at fixed intervals. Kuchum jumped on his white steed, and after him all the noted champions mounted theirs. One after another they raced past the stakes. The sport consisted in dealing a single stroke, in rushing past the stakes, that cut off the head of the person bound to one of them and also, if possible, that of the next one as well. Not everyone managed that: it called for a firm grip and a steady eye. It called also for a horse with strong nerves.

The sport left the muscles healthily aching. That is one of the most gratifying of sensations. It was for the sake of it that the sport was devised. Afterwards a man can eat a mountain of mutton and drink a hogshead of koumiss. The belly gets distended and presses on the blood, and as a result all sorts of cheerful and pleasant fancies pass through the head.

After Kuchum had succeeded Etiger on the throne of Siberia, he ought, no doubt, to have taken over Etiger's obligations. That, at all events, was the opinion of the Muscovite jurists, who pointed out at once that Kuchum had fallen upon a Muscovite vassal who was under the protection of the Russian Tsar. In the past Kuchum's father Murtasa, who had been a reigning prince

somewhere beyond the Urals, at no great distance from Etiger, had sent presents of furs to Moscow. When, in 1563, the news of the upheaval in Siberia reached Moscow, Murtasa's envoy was in the city. He was sent at once to the new Siberian sultan to remind him of the matter of sable and squirrel fur dues.

Kuchum, however, like many before and after him, regarded himself as of the race of Genghis Khan. And when a man feels like that he is not in the habit of paying dues but of exacting them. A year passed, and then a second and a third. Kuchum occupied himself with riding and sport, and had entirely forgotten Moscow.

But Moscow had not forgotten Siberia. Ivan already knew a good deal about Isker and the Ob and the Irtysh, and he wanted to learn more. In 1567 he sent a special expedition to Siberia, to the unknown rulers of unknown races. Two Cossack hetmans, Petrov and Yalychev, set out with a small band of warriors and a few special commissioners to make "sketch maps" and to note down all that they observed. They marched through Kuchum's territory, crossed Mongolia, and reached no less a place than Peking!

The Cossacks reported that the "Mungal land" extended far and wide, from Bokhara to the sea. It was ruled by the Empress Machikatuna, and those who desired to pass southwards across the Great Wall into China Land must have a written and sealed permit from her. The Cossacks gave this description of the Mongols:

"The men are not clean, but the women are very clean; the people wear velvet clothing and chains round their shoulders and boots of their own sort; the horses are good, and the Mungals have many camels; they plough like the Tatars of Tobolsk with the hook-plough, and they distil wine from any sort of corn, without hops; they have no precious stones, and their pearls are bad; there is much silver, which comes into their country through their trade with China; all sorts of grain grow in their country—rye, barley, wheat, oats, millet—and they also have all other seeds and vegetables and gardens as in Russia."

The Cossacks also described the cities of China, and Peking, where "His Highness the Tsar Taibun lives; the city is white as snow, built in a square; at the corners stand towers, and in the windows of the towers are placed heavy cannon; at the gates are guards; there are a great number of shops in the city, all of stone, and in front of them wooden screens painted in many colours; all manner of wares are displayed—satin and silk and cotton, but no woollen cloth; and all sorts of flowers and vegetables, and various sugars and cloves and cinnamon and other spices; there are few precious stones, but in the inns there are as many drinks

as a man will have, and still more harlots; thieves and robbers are hanged and impaled and beheaded; lesser offenders have their hands cut off; the prisons are of stone; the streets in Peking are paved with grey stones; the voyevods there move with a great train of followers and carry parasols."

The Cossacks did not catch sight of the "Chinese Tsar"; they were courteously informed that they could not appear before him empty-handed, and if the Russian Tsar wished to establish relations with him he should send envoys with presents; then the Chinese ruler would send him envoys with presents in return, and all would then be in due order.

That the "Chinese Tsar" would not receive the Russian envoys without presents was felt in Moscow to be entirely natural. Tsar Ivan would have sent the same answer himself. But when Kuchum at last sent to Moscow a note in answer to the reminder about tribute, and sent it not only without presents but not even with an embassy, but by the hand of a simple Vogule named Ivak—is it surprising that Ivan declined to send any reply to such a message? And on top of all, in what a tone was this note conceived!

"God is great!" wrote Kuchum. "This is from the free man Kuchum-Tsar to the Grand Duke, the White Tsar.

"We have heard that thou art great and just. Thy father concluded peace with our father, and envoys passed to and fro from either side, because thy land is near. Thy peoples and our peoples lived at peace, and there was no enmity between them."

Is that the way to write history? "Envoys passed to and fro"—when Prince Kurbsky harnessed the subjects of the "free man" like dogs to his sleighs!

"Until this day I have sent thee no note, because I was at war with my enemy. Now, however, we have taken him captive. He who now desires peace, with him will we conclude peace, but he who wishes for war, with him will we wage war."

Wait a bit, little bird, muttered Ivan; prettily sung—but just wait a bit and see the limed twig we have ready for you!

"I send thee an envoy and visitors; let us make a peace! Set free our citizens whom thou hast taken captive. . . . He with whom the father preserved amity, with him shall the son also preserve amity. We recognize thee as our elder brother—provided that thou desirest peace."

So Kuchum was ready to accept Ivan as a brother. What an honour! He proposed to conclude peace, since there was no quarrel between the two. But a quarrel there was—over those arrears of tribute!

And finally the dignified signature—"Send us a mounted



messenger. Conveying his greeting, this note is sent by Tsar Kuchum."

I'll send thee a mounted messenger, said Ivan—just give me time!

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The brothers Stroganov were informed of all these things. They were well aware of the connexion between the risings in their territories and the new tone of the Siberian messages. When documents of that sort were arriving from beyond the frontier, it was not surprising that the "irredenta" on this side was forming warlike bands. It was no longer merely on its defence, but was itself taking the offensive!

The character of these raids had changed with the accession of Kuchum to the throne. Whole companies of fighters attacked the Stroganovs' men. The Stroganovs could defend themselves against small bodies. But two years after that message from Kuchum, one day in the middle of July, when the work in the fields was at its height, a horde of Cheremisses, Tatars, and Ostyaks fell upon a flotilla of the Stroganovs', looted it, massacred the crews, and set on fire the nearest settlements. With the same speed with which they had appeared, the unbidden guests departed, carrying away many captives, and leaving behind them the ruins of the houses they had burnt down and eighty-seven murdered victims.

Winter passed and summer returned. It brought intense heat and a drought. From May on there was no rain. And one day, at the height of the season's labour, when every pair of hands was full, there came a dark cloud on the horizon. Day and night it remained; at night it was illumined by a vivid glare, and the wind began to carry the smell of burning.

The forest was on fire. A line of flame several miles long was advancing from the north-east. Everything living was fleeing before it—men, women, and children, and animals, and birds who had lost their nests and flew they knew not whither. The thing had happened that has happened so endlessly in the Russian forests. A hermit, living in solitude in the forest for the salvation of his soul, had lit a brushwood fire and had not sufficiently extinguished it. The old man had cooked his "borshch," his soup of forest herbs and mushrooms, and then had slept. Half of the Russian forests are burnt down by a sup of "borshch."

The old recluse suffered a cruel punishment for his negligence—he fled to the Pyskor monastery with his beard burnt off. He had to hide, for his calling demanded a long and impressive beard; he must grow it again, far from human sight, and, above all, far from Grigori and Yakov Stroganov. For the holy man had lost

only his beard, but the brothers had lost the whole forest and in addition immense stores of cut and stacked timber.

The fire was still demanding attention when fresh crowds of refugees appeared. Whole families, who had abandoned hearth and home and ripening fields, streamed into Kankor and Oryol. They were pursued by a far worse danger than the fire: a whole army was on the march from Siberia, gathering on its way Vogules, Ostyaks, Cheremisses, and Tatars, and burning, murdering, looting, and taking prisoners. At its head rode the Siberian Prince Mahmetkul, brother of Tsar Kuchum.

Friendly Tatars brought the first news of this commander. He was a big man and powerfully built. He was so stout that three leather straps on end would not go round him. His neck was like that of the strong red bull Ukur. His forehead, between the eyebrows, was two hands' breadth. He would jump on a vicious mare and beat it with a whip with nine black tails.

When the brothers learned this news, they sent messengers on horseback to all the remote farms and salt-works inviting everyone to come into the fortified towns.

Mahmetkul pushed on as far as the Kama, not stopping until he was only three miles from Oryol. He attempted to capture the city, but was repulsed and made no further attempt. He saw that a siege would be necessary, which would take time, and that the loss of time would mean the arrival of the voyevod of Perm with troops. Mahmetkul contented himself with thoroughly looting the region and also, in view of his brother's favourite sport, taking plenty of prisoners. In the course of reconnaissance he came up against Chebukov, one of the envoys of the Muscovite Tsar. Chebukov was on his way to the Kirghizes. He refused to give himself up alive, and stood with his company on his defence; the whole of them were slaughtered.

This time Grigori and Yakov did not allow the enemy to escape so cheaply as the year before. When Mahmetkul's assault on their fortifications had been repulsed and the Tatars were turning their horses round, the Stroganovs went out in pursuit of the invaders. They pressed them pretty hard, and recovered some of their prisoners. But they did not venture far from their base. Instead they resorted to another expedient—they sent a full report to Moscow of all that had happened, devoting special care to an account of the fate of the Tsar's envoy. At the end of their report, where the Tsar was impatiently waiting for a description of the trophies of victory and a catalogue of the prisoners taken, they stated that they did not venture to make further war on Siberia without the Tsar's special approval.

Is not that strange? Grigori and Yakov, who took so little notice of the Tsar's authorizations when it was a question of

turning free indigenous races into "their subjects," or of seizing other people's landed possessions, did not now venture to pursue the Siberian hordes without Moscow's knowledge!

In reality the brothers had not the slightest fear; but they realized that matters had become serious. They were ready to go ahead, but only on the condition that they had Moscow's co-operation. The two other brothers in Siberia, Kuchum and Mahmetkul, had just as much force at their disposal as Grigori and Yakov had; and there was no sense in fighting them except in alliance with the Tsar of Muscovy.

With what astonishing shrewdness and pertinacity they pursued the policy their great-grandfather had begun and their grandfather and father had established! Their great-grandfather Luka had found his fulcrum in Moscow. From then on, like the slowly moving arm of a mighty derrick, the economic interests of this family had described a great curve from Novgorod to Isker, from the Volkhov to the Irtysh—Kola, Dvina, Solvychegodsk, Perm—Mangaseya—Siberia!

Moscow caught on to the Stroganovs' idea. The answer to their report came in the form of a new charter. The Tsar gave the brothers the "Siberian Ukraine," the land beyond the Ural mountains—that is to say, Mangaseya, and the territory along the Tobol and its tributaries and lakes, the territory from which the armies of the Siberian sultan had been raised. The Stroganovs were instructed to build fortresses, establish garrisons, "build farmhouses, cut down forests, plough fields, render domains serviceable, catch fish, and settle colonists." They were permitted to extract in Siberia not only iron but copper, zinc, lead, and "combustible sulphur."

This grant was for a period of twenty years, until 1594. Thus did Tsar Ivan confer on the Stroganovs Siberia, of which not an acre yet belonged to him. He recognized its annexation in advance, and his charter was simply a proposal that they should set out on the conquest of Siberia.

Now the Stroganovs were assured of Moscow's support! They had never suffered from a narrow outlook; now their horizon had been extended as never before. Such changes were in progress that the Siberian question was now indeed becoming a burning one.

## Chapter 7

### THE ENGLISH DISCOVER MUSCOVY

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IT was the sixteenth century. Far away, remote from the main paths of world history, lay Moscow. Still farther away was the empire of the Stroganovs. Yet there were invisible intellectual waves in the ether that told men of the things that were happening in those distant and unknown lands.

It was in this century that the Europeans discovered the world and shared it out among themselves. They shared out even countries which they had not yet discovered. They hastened, exactly like the Stroganovs, to secure the legal title to "desert land." Pope Alexander VI proceeded with the New World as Ivan the Terrible had done with Siberia: he made grants, on a defective map, of territories that did not belong to him. On paper he distributed "spheres of influence" between Portuguese and Spaniards, and commissioned them to sow in these regions the seed of Christianity and commerce. The other States were then behind in the race, and exerted themselves to make up the lost ground in other unknown regions. They sought new lands, and new routes to India and China, neither of which had yet been invaded by the Spaniards and Portuguese.

Since the days of Columbus everybody had realized that in this search it was possible to come up against the totally unexpected. Sebastian Cabot knew this particularly well. He remembered how long ago, with his father, he had sailed in search of the North-West Passage to China, and had not found it, but had discovered Newfoundland instead. They had been in search of gold and spices; what they found was codfish. Later Cabot sought another, a south-west route to India, and failed but discovered La Plata. In the quest for silver and gold he had found Brazil-wood. All his life he had been seeking one thing and finding another; never had a voyage of discovery proved fruitless. Now, what might there be to be found by thrusting eastwards along the northern shores of Europe?

If everything were known beforehand, there would be no discoveries. So Sebastian is reputed to have said to the sons of those merchants of Bristol who, half a century earlier, had equipped his father's expedition. The merchants' sons caught the idea; they furnished money and chartered three ships:

In his proposal Sebastian, son of the Venetian Giovanni Caboto, revived the idea of another Italian, the historian Paolo

Giovio. Giovio had written in 1525, after talking with the Muscovite envoy, that if a man sailed on and on eastwards from the Dvina estuary he would probably reach China. Thus the idea of the North-East Passage, for which Englishmen, Dutchmen, Swedes, and Russians risked their lives through four centuries, and which has only now been achieved by the Russians, comes from the Italians!

It may be assumed that Sebastian also told his principals that the northern route to China led past countries in which sable and beaver and ermine lived. He is not likely to have known who owned these lands; in any case, the letters of recommendation given to the three captains by King Edward VI were addressed vaguely to "all kings, princes, rulers, and commanders of all lands under the sun." Sebastian was well informed, however, on the subject of furs, and the English merchants were still better informed. For centuries the fur trade had been a monopoly of the Hansa. Now the Hansa was in difficulties. Furs came in scarcely at all through the Hansa cities. Prices were rising incessantly. It was easier to conquer a kingdom than to buy an ermine cloak.

The expedition equipped on Sebastian's advice aroused widespread interest in England. Great sums had been invested in it. The English were keenly concerned to prove that they, too, were capable of discovering new lands and founding colonies. Besides, it vexed them to have to pay extortionate prices to the Dutch and Portuguese for Indian pepper.

In May 1553 the *Bona Esperanza*, the *Edward Bonaventura*, and the *Bona Confidentia* were launched, in the presence of thousands of people. The three ships had a total displacement of 370 tons; their crews totalled seventy-nine, and they had on board eleven merchants as passengers.

The leader of the expedition was Sir Hugh Willoughby. He was a man of the world and a brilliant officer; he had been promoted captain as a young man, though not of a ship but of cavalry guards; circumstances had led him to transfer to the navy. This was in 1550, so that he had been appointed leader of a hazardous expedition to unknown Polar lands after only three years at sea.

The ships sailed from Harwich on May 23. Their stores had been stowed so expertly that while the ships were still lying at anchor owing to adverse winds the provisions began to spoil and the gin leaked from the barrels.

They did not reach the Lofoten Islands until the middle of August. From there they began a random voyage that served no nautical purpose at all. The ships were separated by a storm and failed to rejoin. After waiting a week at the fixed rendezvous,

Richard Chancellor, captain of *Bonaventura*, made for the Dvina, and a week later he anchored alongside the monastery of Saint Nicholas, in the port of Kholmogory, above the present-day city of Archangel.

Meanwhile Willoughby was battling with the difficulties of seamanship. They proved beyond him. The leader of the expedition was innocent of all knowledge of navigation.

After a time *Esperanza* and *Confidentia* reached the Russian shore of Lapland, and entered a little creek where they decided to pass the winter, though it was only the middle of September. They had scarcely any food left, and nobody had yet heard of vitamins. Scurvy wreaked havoc among them. In the early spring Lapp hunters discovered the two floating cemeteries. Willoughby was sitting over his log-book, with the pen still in his frozen hand. His record showed that he was still living in the middle of January 1554. Had he found himself in any such situation with his regiment of cavalry, he would certainly have made an attempt to hack his way out at any cost.

Meanwhile Chancellor had reached the Dvina estuary. He was given a friendly reception by the authorities at Kholmogory; they hospitably entertained the Englishmen while messengers rode to Moscow and back. The order came from Moscow that the guests were to be taken to see the Tsar.

Ivan the Terrible was not only terrible but shrewd. He realized that in prohibiting the Hansa merchants from trading in Russia he had injured himself no less than the "Germans." The Moscow merchants had continually agitated against the Hanseatic traders: they were go-betweens, and took all the cream from the Russian milk—away with them; let anyone else come in their place! But whence should anyone else come when, in spite of all efforts, the Baltic route was blocked? Now—what joy—rivals of the Hansa merchants had come of their own accord, and rivals who were not just middlemen but actual consumers. They would open the way for Moscow to Europe!

The Englishmen dined with the Tsar in the Golden Hall. Over a hundred sat down to the banquet. The tables were laid with a service of gold; a hundred and fifty attendants changed their uniforms three times during the meal—no wonder, since it lasted several hours. Not only the clothes of the boyars but those of the attendants shone with gold ornamentation. Later the Englishmen told in London of the "incomparable magnificence" of the Tsar's court.

In February 1554 Chancellor set off on the voyage home, with an exceedingly gracious letter from Ivan to Edward VI. In the meantime, however, the English king had died. Queen Mary received Chancellor, who handed her Ivan's letter. The captain

who had discovered a new country was fêted and honoured; Sebastian Cabot received congratulations from all sides. At once a company "for the Discovery of new Lands, Islands, and Dominions" was founded. Behind this lengthy title lay a purpose which the Londoners expressed in simpler terms: they gave the company the name of "Muscovy Company," and under this title it has passed into history. It was the first of the great colonial trading companies which later conquered the New and the Old World for Europe. It served as a model for the Dutch and the English East India companies, founded half a century later. It sent out a number of expeditions east and west. Among its captains were Baffin and Hudson, both of whom sailed along the Russian coasts.

In the following year Chancellor returned to Kholmogory. This time he brought four ships, laden principally with cloth and sugar. What it was that chiefly interested the English is shown by the fact that one of the vessels went on, under Captain Borough, to discover the sea route—not to China, but to Mangaseya. The English, too, preferred "first-hand" trade, and the actual owners of furs lived there, beyond the Urals, in Siberia.

Borough had learnt the sea route to Mangaseya from fur traders of the Dvina country, who sailed thither in their primitive little vessels. He reached Novaya Zemlya and the Vaygach islands. Farther than this he was not allowed to go, even in August, by those stern guards of the Iron Gate, fog and storms and towering icebergs.

Chancellor returned to London with full cargoes, a trade treaty, and an envoy from the Tsar. The treaty was ample compensation for the undiscovered route to China: it gave the English the right to trade free of Customs duties in all the towns and provinces of Russia. They received a number of other privileges, but not the one they coveted above all else, a trade monopoly. Ivan counted on other visitors following the English; when that happened, it would be possible to talk to the English in a very different tone. In due time everything happened as he had hoped.

Poor Chancellor, however, had no luck. On the return voyage his ship struck a rock on the Scottish coast and was wrecked. The great navigator was drowned. Yet the envoy from Moscow, who had never before seen the sea, swam ashore, and saved not only his own life but the Tsar's message.

He took it in safety to the Queen, but of all the presents he was to have brought her only the list remained. The actual presents were thrown up on the shore with a part of the ship's cargo, and were carefully collected by the local residents. But as these residents were Scots there could be no question of giving up the goods.

After this first contact a regular trade began between England and Russia, via the White Sea. English merchants established warehouses in Kholmogory, and built houses and began to trade. These oversea guests were welcome in Moscow. They were so well entertained that it took them three days to get rested: they were taken to the hunt, and bear-fights were organized for them; one after another the Tsar's picadors, "brave young fellows," attacked a giant Kirghiz bear with their hunting-spears. In the accounts of the sport that have been preserved we read that "the bear ate Kondrashka's hand off, and ate Senka's head off"—whether this means that it actually swallowed them or merely bit them off need not be discussed.

The establishment of trade relations with the English was a matter of great importance to Ivan. After the seventy-five years of Moscow's anti-Hanseatic policy it provided economic justification for it, and it justified the whole Novgorodian epic. Ivan was afraid of frightening off the English, but he did not want to fall into their clutches. He wanted an energetic, diplomatic, and trustworthy controller for them, a man in no way afraid of responsibility.

After thinking over all this, Ivan sent a messenger to Anika Stroganov. Anika was commissioned to see to it that the English met all their obligations, that they gave no offence to the Russians, and that they were themselves given no offence. Anika was to inspect all their goods, and to buy whatever the Tsar's court required.

It may be imagined what power and prestige this conferred on Anika, and what sums passed once more through his counting-house. There were fine profits to be made out of this trade. But Anika was not interested in petty gains. He repaid the English in double measure for their presents. It was payment for what they were teaching him. He saw in their hands guns and saws of new construction, watches, and compasses; thanks to them he saw new horizons, and, beyond those, new markets! It was only when he met the Englishmen that he realized his own greatness, his wealth and the immensity of his resources.

Once only did he make the voyage to their country; after that he sent his sons. Grigori and Yakov understood as well as their father did what the arrival of the English might mean. These English were sending a ship of their own to Mangaseya—that Mangaseya which Anika's representatives had long been visiting. With the furs of Mangaseya it would be possible to buy up these proud seafarers, ships and compasses and all!

This judgment was confirmed as years passed. Mangaseya remained a secret treasure, the key to which lay in Anika's and his sons' hands. So it was considered in Moscow; so thought



the English, and the Dutch who came after them. The Stroganovs knew that the key was of value only to those who were able to reach the gate. The sea route from the Dvina to the Ob was so difficult and so hazardous that it was virtually impracticable. The northern land route—the route taken by Saint Stephen along the Vym to the Pechora—was little better. But there was a third route. It passed through the land of Perm, by the Chusovaya across the Urals and on to the Tobol. It was possible by this route to reach Mangaseya by water—and perhaps to travel on to China. But this route led through the territories of Tsar Kuchum. Thus history promised to repeat itself between the Dvina and the Kama—*delenda est Carthago*!

The Stroganovs were sensitive to the radiations of sixteenth-century ideas. Genoa, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Bristol had broadcast through the world the dream of China—the dream of gold and silks and spices, of plants from whose flower-buds snow-white little woollen lambs could be peeled off, of birds whose golden plumage emitted an emerald radiance at night, of fishes whose bellies were full of pearl spawn.

Sebastian Cabot was brooding in London over the route to China. Ivan the Terrible was brooding in Moscow over that route. Anika Stroganov was brooding over it at Kankor. And for him the route was more real and less remote than for Sebastian and Ivan. For him it was bound up with the route to Mangaseya; but Mangaseya belonged to him!

Man, however, is not immortal. No one has completed his task on earth unless he has provided for its continuation by his sons. After their father's death Grigori and Yakov began to explore the route to China.

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After the English, the Dutch appeared at Kholmogory.

Ivan the Terrible was delighted: the foreigners were in bitter competition with one another, and trying by every possible means to put a spoke in each other's wheels. In 1565 a Dutch ship put into the estuary of the northern Dvina. Among the merchants on board was a certain Oliver Brunell, a man from Brussels, of unknown origin, who had entered the Dutch service. On arrival at Kholmogory his first concern was to find a teacher and to begin to learn Russian. He made great efforts to establish himself in Russia; he travelled about the country round Kholmogory, and very soon opened business premises in which he extended exquisite hospitality to Russian merchants and officials.

At this time there were a good many English at Kholmogory. They had no liking for Brunell's activities; rumours spread in the city of all sorts of big plans of this Dutch visitor's, and of a

powerful Dutch company at his back. The English hastened to take counter-measures. If Brunell could show hospitality to the Russian voyevods, so could the English. Evidently they were able to do it still better, for before long Brunell was arrested on a charge of espionage on behalf of Sweden. He was sent to Yaroslavl for interrogation.

Brunell might well have remained in prison to this day, had not his destiny become involved in the Stroganovs' plans. The Stroganovs had the same desire as Tsar Ivan to carry on trade with foreign countries as far as possible without intermediaries. For this purpose they needed men who were familiar with foreign countries and could speak their language. Owing to the endless wars with Sweden, Lithuania, and Livonia, there were many foreigners in captivity in Russia. The agents of the Stroganov brothers kept an eye on these captives, watching for men of education with commercial experience.

Brunell was the very man for their purpose. He was, it was true, no ordinary captive, but a man under political suspicion; but for the all-powerful brothers such obstacles had no existence. When their representative arrived to "take over the prisoner," they came to terms with him in Russian with the utmost ease. This was in 1570; Brunell had had five years to study Russian in his prison. He had made himself perfect in the language.

Brunell was soon sent to Siberia as the Stroganovs' plenipotentiary. He went by the Pechora to Mangaseya, and came back with a vast supply of furs. The Stroganovs were hugely content, and so was Brunell. A year later he was selling Stroganov furs in Dordrecht, Amsterdam, and Paris. Then he returned to Russia. From his second journey to Mangaseya he brought back not only furs but the news of a great river flowing into the Arctic Ocean east of the Ob; the natives, he said, declared that it was possible to go up this river right into China. Clearly the Yenisei.

The Stroganovs suggested to Brunell that he should himself organize an expedition to explore the route to China. The year 1581 found Brunell again abroad. On the island of Oesel he met Johann Balach, a friend of the famous cosmographer Mercator, and he told Balach that the Stroganovs had already built two ships for the expedition to China and had brought two shipbuilders for this special purpose from Sweden. Brunell then went to Holland and negotiated with the Prince of Orange for his financial participation in the proposed expedition; he asked him also to recommend experienced Dutch shipmasters for the enterprise.

That is the last we hear of Brunell. What it was that led him to abandon the enterprise we do not know. It may have been any of those circumstances that so frequently upset great projects

—death, or, perhaps, marriage. Or he may have had too vivid a memory of his Russian studies in the Yaroslavl prison.

In any case, Brunell's efforts were not fruitless. His plans were known to his fellow-countryman Peter Plancius, who was living in Holland and had founded the school of navigation at Amsterdam. At this school Willem Barents was then completing his studies. This Barents later led three Dutch expeditions "to China"; he explored the Arctic Ocean between Spitzbergen, Murman, and Novaya Zemlya—the region now known as Barents Sea. He sailed round the north of Novaya Zemlya, and on its eastern coast he lost his life.

But why had the Stroganovs dropped the enterprise? The question is not difficult to answer. Throughout this time they had been at war with Kuchum. They had seen his apocalyptic brother at the gates of their city of Oryol. They had received from the Tsar their mandate for Siberia. During Brunell's ten years in their service the watch on the Kama had twice been changed: in 1570 Anika had died, and between 1575 and 1579 the brothers Grigori and Yakov had both died. Those ten years had passed in incessant war. The Stroganovs had realized that for them all roads led through Siberia; but both the road to China and the road to Mangaseya were blocked by Kuchum.

In the same year, 1581, in which Brunell was carrying on negotiations with the Prince of Orange, Yermak marched with his force across the Urals.

## Chapter 8

### COSSACKS

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**Y**ERMAK was the "Russian Pizarro" who conquered Siberia and offered it as a gift to Ivan the Terrible. So we read in the history-books, and we must proceed from this position. But to explain "how it all happened" calls for answers to all sorts of questions.

The story of Yermak's life is as obscure as the circumstances that led up to his expedition. There is no dearth of documents, but they are full of contradictions. In modern Russian historical research, which does not rest content with "anecdotes," it had become the rule thirty years ago, before the last war, never to mention Yermak's name.

We know the part the Stroganovs played in the struggle for access to Siberia. Tsar Ivan had not only "conveyed" Siberia to them, but had actually commanded them to erect fortifications along the Tobol; he had, in fact, virtually called upon them to invade Siberia in force. But he had placed no force at their disposal. They were left to arm "their men" themselves.

The Stroganovs grasped the difficulties of this situation better than the Moscow strategists. The Muscovite officials made light of distributing foreign territory and disposing of other tsars. But by the Kama and the Chusovaya it was a familiar fact that it would be necessary to be safe from the attentions of Kuchum and Mahmetkul before setting out for Siberia. The Stroganovs were not irresponsible adventurers. They had had two hundred years' experience of colonization and pioneering.

They had the funds for an expedition against Siberia. But they had no men to spare. They needed their men for the defence of their frontiers. At the same time, they were aware of the existence of an ample human reserve, from which they could draw just as many daring young fellows as were wanted for any sort of enterprise.

This reserve was formed by the men living by the lower reaches of the Volga, the Don, and the Dnieper. They were men who for one reason or another had fallen foul of the laws of Muscovy. They called themselves Cossacks. The people of Muscovy called them "free men." In official documents they were described as vagabonds, thieves, robbers, deserters, and runaway peasants.

To determine where the Cossack ended and the robber began was no easy task. At home by the Don they were citizens of a

military republic. If they sailed down to the Sea of Azov or the Caspian they became "combatants." On the Volga they turned into robbers. Along the Volga and even in the Caspian they robbed Russian merchants, or Persian.

They also robbed envoys—Persian, Bokharan, and, if opportunity offered, Muscovite. About the time when the Stroganovs beat off Mahmetkul's onslaught, the Don Cossacks sailed up the Don, landed where it approaches the Volga, and then sailed down the Volga and across the Caspian to the estuary of the Ural. They sailed about fifty versts (thirty miles) up the Ural, and there fell on the city of Saraichik, the capital of the Nogai Khan. It was a big city on an island; the houses were of stone, and there were mosques and well-stocked warehouses: through Saraichik went the trade between Bokhara and Muscovy.

The Nogai Khan barely escaped from the island with his bodyguard, which he prized too highly to expose to the risks of battle. The Cossacks carried out a thorough examination of the contents of his capital. They worked so conscientiously that they even dug up the dead from the graves and took off them their precious golden ornaments.

A campaign of that sort required thorough preparation, and was not lightly to be attempted. There was strict discipline among the Cossacks. They maintained it even when they wandered through the gardens of love. The young women of Nogai were sent meticulously unsullied to the Don, to be transported thence to the harems of Stamboul and the Crimea. This was an important part of the enterprise.

The maintenance of discipline even in such matters required a strong hand. This had been seen to. At the head of the campaign was the hetman Ivan Kolzo, a competent and experienced man. He had as assistants the hetmans Barbosch, Mitya Britoussov, and Ivan Yuryev. Clearly these three were specialists of repute in their profession, for, after Khan Urus had addressed his complaint to Ivan the Terrible, Tsar Ivan sent a punitive expedition to the Volga, with orders to capture and hang these three particular hetmans.

Kolzo and his comrades were aware that the Muscovite voyevods were a more serious problem than the Nogai Khan. They well remembered how a few years earlier the voyevod Murashkin had erected gallows on rafts, had hanged hardy Cossacks on them, and had then sent the rafts floating down little mother Volga and the quiet Don to the Cossacks' cherry orchards and white villages.

From the Don a message reached the Cossacks that they had better not show themselves there. They were thanked for the Nogai virgins, but there was no desire at all to become involved,

over a private enterprise of Kolzo's and his comrades', in a war with the Tsar.

This gave the Cossacks food for thought: not that they for one moment lost their heads. An old proverb of the Don says: "The real Cossack is not the one who wins, but the one who manages to wriggle out of a tight corner." That was now the task to be faced. The only remaining line of retreat was northward, to the Kama. There they appeared in 1580.

Their supreme commander, hetman of all the hetmans, was this time Yermak Timofeyevich. Where had he been before this? Many references in the chronicles and all legends and folk songs agree in one and the same story: Yermak had carried on his existence with Kolzo and four other hetmans on the Volga, robbing and plundering; there he first gained fame.

The Stroganovs, hard pressed by Mahmetkul, "made these brave men an offer of honourable service." They sent the brave men presents, and a flattering letter; "they urged them to abandon their occupation, which was unworthy of Christian heroes, and asked them thenceforward not to be men of prey, but men of war of the White Tsar"—and so on. The chronicles even give the exact date of this communication: it was dispatched on April 6, 1579. The chronicles further relate that when Yermak and his comrades read the letter "they shed tears of contrition," and that when they had finished weeping "they marched with flags flying along the banks of the Volga," and on June 21 of the same year, with a band of five hundred and forty followers, joined the Stroganovs.

This narrative is the basis of all the romances subsequently written about Yermak. As so often happens, the product of all this accumulation of invention was a marzipan figure, a Yermak for high-school girls. And from that mould came the conventional record of the history-books.

It is not difficult to understand how this happened. The "protocol" concerning Yermak's campaign was compiled half a century after his death. Cyprian, the first archbishop of Siberia, began to collect the oral traditions and recollections of this campaign. The angle from which the compilation was edited is shown by the fact that Cyprian had in mind the canonization of Yermak. Failing to secure this, he contented himself with working for the devotion of special attention in the church services to the good deeds of Yermak and his hetmans on behalf of Christianity. Cyprian was a man of strong faith and pure heart, but he was a politically minded prelate, the "Grand Inquisitor" of Siberia. He needed the myth of Saint Yermak, and so he created it.

Bearing this in mind, let us look critically at the story of Yermak.

He cannot well have "shed tears of contrition" on reading the missive from the Stroganovs, since that missive was never written or dispatched. No one has ever set eyes on it; it is not to be found in the Stroganov archives; what is more, Yermak was not in the habit of shedding tears.

To have had "flags flying" would have been risky for men who had to slip past the Muscovite troops as quietly and unobtrusively as they could on their northward trek; and, in any case, the Cossacks had no flags to boast about in their possession; when they joined the Stroganovs they expressly asked that flags should be embroidered for them. And a final objection to the story, simple but weighty, is the fact that Yermak could not have had his flag flying by the Volga because he was not there at the time. When Kolzo and his hetmans were busy about the harems and tumuli of Saraichik, Yermak was fighting with his band on the Livonian front. Consequently, in the menacing Tsarist document that condemned the robber captains and hetmans to death there is no mention of Yermak, though all the other men, who in comparison with him were of no importance, are named with their Christian names and the names of their fathers.

With a wild whoop they had fallen at Saraichik upon the Nogaiers, who fled at the very sight of the furious Cossack onslaught. Yermak meanwhile was fighting the Livonian and Swedish knights, men in iron armour, who understood the art of war better than the Cossacks. In his combats with them Yermak had learnt the real principles of war and strategy. Compared with Kolzo and the rest, Yermak was not a hetman but a general staff officer.

Who were these hetmans? Ivan Kolzo had been a prisoner of the Turks, confined in a pit with hurdles placed over it. In front of the pit his guards had passed the night telling one another how Hodja Nasr Eddin had tamed his shrew of a wife. Next day it was the guards who were in the pit, and the Cossack was crouching among reeds and waiting for dark. If he heard Turkish voices he put his head under the water, holding on to roots and breathing through a reed. It wanted doing, but it had to be done!

Mitya Britoussov had spent the funds of his Cossack village on drink; he was publicly whipped for it. He set out to fight the Poles, and returned with the golden cross of a Polish church for his Cossack church. He was elected village hetman. He was caught, however, with a certain Cossack lady by her outraged husband, and fled trouserless into the steppe. He entered into the service of countrymen bringing salt from the Crimea; he carried off a young Tatar woman in his waggon, and when her tribe caught up the procession of carts they killed all the peasants; Britoussov alone "wriggled out" of the tight corner, and succeeded in escaping to the Volga.

There is no question that Yermak had lived by the Don. He was much too adept at every Cossack trick and dodge, much too much "one of themselves," for that to be in doubt. He had been in command, indeed, of a Cossack detachment in the Livonian war. For a bold "free" man who had inherited no connexions in the army or the bureaucracy through his forefathers' services, the road to the Don was the regular path of advancement. Yermak's ancestors were not of the class that could procure him entry into the higher ranks of society. His grandfather was a driver in the Murom forests; he drove respectable people and robbers alike, for these forests had an evil reputation. The grandfather's intercourse with the bureaucracy was confined to the voyevod who gave the order for him and his passengers to be thrown into the prison at Vladimir. He had no desire to go on with his passengers to the gallows, and managed to escape; he took his wife and children and settled far away by the Volga. His children settled still farther away, by the Chusovaya, where no Muscovite officials could get at them. And there the hero of Siberia was born.

Young Yermak had a sturdy body and a ready tongue. Both were needed in his occupation: at first he was a porter, and later a sailor on the rivers. But he had no ambition to carry the Stroganovs' salt about for his whole life, and so he went to the Don.

His career on the Don was in no way distinguished; his name is not connected with any event of importance in that region. Only a Don Cossack rooted in the region, like Kolzo, Britoussov, Yuryev, and the rest, could go far there. Yermak was a son of the north, and his home was on the upper Volga, near the Kama, or on the Chusovaya.

Yermak remained long at his work on the Volga. There is no doubt that he had no interest in reconciling his activities with the civil and criminal law of Moscow. He was a Russian freebooter, a Cossack by profession, with a sense of a mission to be a river pirate, a robber because he could do no other, and, accordingly, a loyal subject of the Tsar at a respectable distance.

There were men like that before him and after him. Today a soldier of the Tsar, tomorrow a Volga pirate. All these things harmonized admirably in a single soul, just as did roughness and tenderness, blasphemy and piety. Man is a many-stringed guitar, but there are some men who, unlike the guitar, will not fit into any case. Such men are the chosen subjects of minstrelsy and legend.

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## Chapter 9

### GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT

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THE Livonian war brought Yermak nothing but disappointments. Instead of capturing enemy towns, his side had to give up its own. And after an unsuccessful war the mercenary does not get his pay.

Yermak returned to the Volga, and there he met Kolzo and the other brethren. After their assault on Saraichik they had moved on and on toward the north, to escape from the Tsar's troops. The farther north they went, the paler grew the skies and the darker the forests. Where was the silky heron grass of the steppe? Instead of the waving grass there were only tough bilberry plants. The bilberries had the advantage that they could be eaten. But when a man has been living for some time on nothing but bilberries he loses all his stamina.

It was at this point that Yermak appeared; to the Cossacks he seemed a messenger from heaven. He had a better knowledge of geography than they, he did not get lost as they did in the damp, impenetrable, terrible forests, which oppressed and intimidated these southerners from the Don. He had no sooner arrived than the forest became full of all sorts of good things—suddenly there was meat, and berries, and mushrooms, and even honey. Yermak was always cheerful. When he took off his shirt and felled a pine with an axe, it did one good to see him.

Had Yermak already talked to the Stroganovs' agents? It is not certain. The agents were then in search all over Russia of the men they needed—we have seen how they got hold of Brunell. They may have discovered Yermak. In any case, Yermak led his troop straight to the Stroganovs.

The Stroganovs were under an obligation to Yermak for making his men behave tolerably, and keeping them from plundering the Russian colonists who were streaming to enter the Stroganovs' service. The one thing the starving Cossacks wanted was to have enough to eat. Yermak fed them; that is to say, of course, the Stroganovs kept them supplied with food under agreement with Yermak. Then the Cossacks wanted something to do, and Yermak allowed them to do a little "plucking" of the neighbouring Vogules, Ostyaks, and Cheremisses.

When they had had their fill and had quietened down, little father Yermak began to tighten discipline a bit. "My dear children," he said to them, "we must have discipline." Two

Cossacks had broken into a peasant's home; they killed the peasant, and did with his wife and daughter what in thieves' language is called "betrothal under the birches." The peasants complained to the hetman. The Cossacks, when interrogated, defended themselves by saying that they had got drunk and had remembered the jolly times at Saraichik; they also dwelt on the hardships of campaigning and on their services to the country.

Yermak listened to all this. Then he ordered that the Cossacks should be put into sacks which should then be filled up with sand and sunk at a deep spot in the middle of the river. He did not accept the culprits' drunkenness as an extenuating circumstance. The Stroganovs made no difficulty at all about supplying the sacks.

Two days later one of his hetmans, the rough and rude Matvei Meshcheryak, began to offer criticism in Yermak's presence of people who "don't know the Cossack customs" and were evidently thinking of "setting up among the Cossacks here a boarding-school for young gentlewomen." This hetman was well known as a coarse, quarrelsome fellow. Yermak listened grimly, gripping his curly beard.

"Have you finished?" he asked.

"Yes, I've done," said the hetman.

"Are you drunk?"

"Drunk, but sober in my head," said the Cossack, roaring with laughter.

"We'll make you soberer still," retorted Yermak.

In vain did Meshcheryak try to defend himself—there was no standing against five hefty Cossacks. He was bound hand and foot, his clothes filled in front with sand, and then he was put in the water, but not far from the bank, at a shallow spot, and only for a few hours.

Yermak had many worries. He was not cruel, but he kept his men in order by "object lessons." The sturdiest patriots could make no complaint; his whole penal system was strictly founded on Don customs. Some culprits were put in the water, some put in chains; for immorality the offender was stripped naked and washed in public! Then, according to the circumstances, he was either locked out in the cold or given a thorough whipping.

Meanwhile there had been changes among the Stroganovs. Grigori and Yakov had died, and their sons Nikita and Maxim were now in charge. They were living by the Kama and the Chusovaya, with their uncle Semyon still at the original home at Solvychevodsk. Yermak negotiated with Yakov's son Maxim.

It did not take Yermak long to reorganize and discipline his troop. But the negotiations with Maxim took time, and it took still more time for Maxim to consult his cousin Nikita and their

uncle Semyon. Semyon saw nothing particular against the enterprise, but he was not fond of dipping into his pocket. Cousin Nikita had no liking at all for warlike adventures. He was overburdened already and had no men to spare. And there had been a lull for some time, so that he had gained a sense of security.

But that sense of security was premature. In order to fall upon the Stroganovs, the enemy had no need to be always at their gate. He could make a lightning attack and disappear as suddenly as he came. In July 1581 Prince Beguli came from the river Pelym in Siberia with a body of seven hundred men. They fell upon the Stroganovs' little town by the Chusovaya—invading a region that had been conveyed to Yakov Stroganov and had been inherited by Maxim.

It was a violent assault; many men were slain, plundered, or taken into captivity. The peril was great, and uncle Semyon sent reinforcements from remote Solvychevodsk. By the time these arrived, Beguli had come and gone; only his traces were still smoking. Nikita sent a message that he was sure that God would come to their aid; his men were all indispensable.

It is not difficult to imagine the feelings of Maxim and uncle Semyon. Their fury is shown by the fact that they did not hesitate to denounce Nikita in Moscow before Tsar Ivan himself. In Moscow this family quarrel was taken very seriously. The prince of Pelym was a vassal of Kuchum's. Only yesterday Kuchum's brother had been at the gates of Muscovy; today his vassal had come; tomorrow he might come himself!

In their complaint Maxim and Semyon insisted that Beguli had come "to explore the road to Perm." They, too, were of the opinion that their family dissension was a matter that concerned the State.

The answer to their complaint took the form of a menacing communication to Nikita Stroganov. It was sealed in black.

In this communication the Tsar commanded Nikita to lend all support to Maxim and Semyon in their military activities. It was also mentioned in the communication that the voyevod of Perm had been instructed by the Tsar to hasten to the aid of the Stroganovs at their first appeal.

And now we are faced by a riddle unsolved to this day. Why should Maxim and Semyon have to appeal to the Tsar for help from Perm, why could they not themselves deal with the Pelym horde, if they had the services of Yermak's Cossacks at hand? They were providing food and drink for these Cossacks. Could Yermak listen idly to stories of bands of Vogules exterminating Russian settlers, could he almost watch them at work, and do nothing to help the Stroganovs? Apart from the moral aspect, a punitive expedition against the Vogules would have brought in

a fine bag of booty. Was there ever a mercenary in the world who was blind to such a chance?

But Yermak took no part in the defeat of Beguli. The famous historian Karamzin writes of the heroic deeds of Yermak's men at this time, but it is a fable; in the annals to which he refers it is related that Beguli's attack was repulsed with losses and that Beguli was himself taken prisoner; but of any participation of Yermak in the action there is not a word.

It is always difficult to explain why anything failed to happen. It may be that Yermak, who was negotiating and haggling with the Stroganovs at the time, wanted to let them see what they would have to face if they did not have his help. Or was he unwilling to be diverted by smaller matters from his main enterprise? The report of the Pelym aggression may, indeed, have been greatly exaggerated by the Stroganovs in order to frighten Moscow into giving assurances of its aid, and at the same time to induce the Tsar to compel the unwilling Nikita to support their expedition to Siberia.

No answer has yet been discovered to these conjectures. One thing is clear: Yermak had secured excellent information as to all the circumstances, and had thoroughly grasped the fact that it was much more to his advantage to go southward into Siberia by the Chusovaya than through Pelym. He was interested in the Tobol and the Irtysh, not the Vym and the Pechora—that is to say, in the route of the Bokharan and Chinese merchants, not that of Saint Stephen. He knew just as well as Tamerlane had done that “the world thrives thanks to the merchants.”

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When the Stroganovs got into touch through Moscow with the voyevod of Perm, Yermak lost all desire to remain in their territory. Kolzo and his friends had little inclination to meet the troops of the Tsar. Maxim, too, considered that, while his guests were reasonably well-behaved, there was no need for them to make themselves too thoroughly at home on his land.

No shorthand notes were taken of the conversations between Maxim and Yermak. But it is not likely that they used the grandiloquent language that later historians seem to have regarded as called for by the occasion. We have no reason to assume that Maxim struck an attitude before Yermak and developed to him the programme of a vast Russian empire reaching from the Vistula to the Pacific, or that Yermak, taking his cue from him, swore to dedicate his life to the service of the Tsar and the Orthodox faith. It is much more likely that what they discussed, with or without a bottle of wine, was an entirely realistic enterprise. It was primarily a trading enterprise; but both Maxim and Yermak

realized that it had an extremely important political background. Yermak was sent out to take *de facto* possession of the country along the Tobol and the Irtysh, which was already *de jure* in the Stroganovs' possession under the Tsar's charter of 1574. That was a rather vague commission. In practice, Yermak was to give Kuchum such a hiding that he would lose for all time any inclination to send his vassals into Stroganov territory. The result of that hiding would be the opening of a southern route to Mangaseya for its furs.

It was from some such entirely commercial consideration as this that Maxim and Semyon equipped Yermak. Yermak undertook to reimburse all their expenditure with a percentage added. Maxim and Semyon Stroganov financed the expedition and shared in its profit.

The later narratives that labour to represent Yermak as hero and saint did all that was possible to hush up the prosaic and commercial character of the expedition, betraying it only through the statement in the chronicle that Yermak gave no signed undertaking and gave only verbal promises—meaning that percentage.

Leaving all details out of account, we have here the record of a typical agreement concerning a colonial expedition of that period. In 1670 the Anglo-German Prince Rupert, of the Palatinate, founded the Hudson's Bay Company. His cousin Charles II gave the company its charter for the collection of furs in Canada, of which not a square foot belonged to Charles. Close relations of those beavers and sables and black foxes and ermines that had lured the Russians to Siberia, and established them there, conferred the Dominion of Canada on the British Commonwealth.

The Stroganovs' enterprise was not given such perfect juridical shape as that of the gentlemen adventurers of London. But it dated from almost a century earlier. Ivan the Terrible was much more wide awake than Charles II to what he was doing when he conferred his charter on the Stroganovs. And the Stroganovs knew much more about furs than did the English aristocrats. Yermak, too, was of much more significance both as a man and as a historical character than the Canadian pioneer Pierre Radisson. But the beavers, sables, and foxes were the same. They yielded to humanity the far north alike of the Old World and of the New.

At last Yermak had completed the organization of his expedition. He had added to his own troops a special detachment of "Russians, Tatars, Lithuanians, and Germans"; the last two categories were captives brought from the Lithuanian front. The whole body numbered something over eight hundred men. Three hundred had been supplied by the Stroganovs.

Maxim and his uncle Semyon had had to equip their men. We are told that they supplied three cannon, "some muskets," and for each man three pounds of powder and shot, three poods (108 lb.) of rye flour, a pood of biscuit, a pood of salt, and two poods of buckwheat and "tolokno" (roast and pounded oats), the usual campaigning food throughout Europe from the Urals to the Adriatic.

In addition to this, each warrior—it sounds like a fairy-tale—was given by Maxim two and a half pounds of butter and half a pig.

We have exact knowledge of the way Russian soldiers were fed on a campaign. They took neither biscuits nor flour nor bacon nor butter. We also know the route by which Yermak set out—up the Chusovaya to the watershed; then he had to get the whole of his baggage across the Urals. They were not mountains in that region but hills; but the Cossacks had no horses, and they had to take everything on their own backs.

Cannon Yermak certainly did not have. There is no subsequent mention of them anywhere. The "poods" and half-pigs, too, were a great exaggeration. Nevertheless, Yermak was well provided. His equipment is said to have cost the Stroganovs twenty thousand roubles! Even Tsar Ivan had not a sum like that at his disposal.

The Cossacks crossed the Urals without misadventure. A few men were tempted to stray—and were seen no more. Some twenty men who shared Nikita's opinion that the enterprise was too adventurous, and who accordingly decided to turn back, alone or in couples, were sunk into the water. These were the only losses in crossing the Urals.

The Stroganovs had furnished the troop with flags. The flags were also ikons—the Stroganov sempstresses had embroidered them with every possible saint. More than one sempstress sighed as she made the last stitch.

At the end of September 1581 Yermak's troop had crossed the Urals and had followed eastward-flowing streams to the river Tura. Here began the empire of the great Siberian Tsar Kuchum.

YERMAK CONQUERS AN EMPIRE

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THE Siberian empire of Tsar Kuchum did not comprise the Siberia we see on the map. It consisted only of a small part of it, lying along the rivers Ob and Irtysh. It lay, however, in the very region through which the road went eastward from the Urals to Mangaseya. It blocked that road like a felled tree-trunk. It had to be removed—and that Yermak did.

He achieved it very quickly and with very small forces. He had eight hundred men; Kuchum had far more. His forces were better armed than those of the Siberian Tsar, but the superiority was in no way comparable with that of the Spaniards in America over the Indians, who did not even possess iron weapons. Yermak had no cannon, and only a small number of his men carried firearms. The Cossacks had not a single horse, while Kuchum and his men were mounted. His cavalry could move quickly in any direction, while the Cossacks were tied to their rafts, which were laden with all their supplies.

And finally there was an immense difference between the Tatars and the Aztecs: the Tatars were descendants of the conquerors of Mongolia, and were no pacifists; warfare was their trade and they knew how to pursue it.

Whence, then, came Yermak's successes? They were the result of a clever strategy and a still shrewder policy. Kuchum's "imperium" was not a unified State. It comprised several vassal princedoms, of alien race; their peoples differed from the Tatars in language and religion. Kuchum and some of his Tatars were Mohammedans; the other peoples were pagans. They paid tribute to Kuchum, and at bottom it made no difference to them to whom they had to pay it. They were poor defenders of the Siberian empire.

In order to grasp these facts and to make the right use of them, it was not sufficient to be a daring hetman or even a good general. It was necessary to be able to subordinate both strategy and policy to a broader aim. The man who could do that could conquer an empire.

Many "conquerors" after Yermak invaded Siberia. But he stands apart. In the Siberian Valhalla few are worthy to drink out of the same goblet with him.

The Cossacks proceeded down the Tura; on its banks they saw Tatars on horseback and foot-soldiers drawn from the nomad

Ostyaks and Vogules. They also saw their huts. The Cossacks were full of curiosity as to the contents of the huts. A body of eight hundred troops has many needs. No doubt the Cossacks satisfied their intelligible curiosity.

This produced the first skirmishes. From the high right bank of the Tura there came a sudden shower of arrows against the Cossacks. At this spot the river was fairly broad, and the arrows did not do much harm. The Cossacks fired two or three salvos, and the enemy, hearing the "thunder from the heavens" break suddenly upon a clear autumn day, retreated in the utmost haste.

This attempt at resistance had been made by Kuchum's vassal Yepancha—and in reward for his daring his little capital city was looted. The encampments in the vicinity suffered the same fate. The Cossacks were unable, however, to penetrate farther by water, for the cold weather had set in and the Tura began to don its winter suit of ice. Yermak wintered in the ruins of the old Tatar town of Chingatura (now Tyumen).

He set free the prisoners he had taken in the fighting against Yepancha, telling them that he had no wish to do them any harm; all he wanted was to capture Kuchum himself. Napoleon sent out precisely the same message in the proclamations he issued to the peoples whose kings he was fighting.

In May 1582 the Cossacks repaired their barges and rafts and went on down the Tura. This river carried them into the Tobol. In the course of the winter Yepancha's men had appeared before Kuchum and had told him of the countless Russian hosts hastening forward on winged ships. At their head there was approaching, they said, a valiant Russian warrior, on board a ship with red sails. He drank koumiss from a golden horn, and shot flaming arrows from a silver bow. When the arrows flew off, a vast cloud of smoke rose into the sky, and there was a clap of thunder that mowed down trees and men.

Kuchum listened to the narratives, and then assembled an army, at the head of which he placed his War Minister Tausan, with orders to go out to meet the valiant Russian. Kuchum did not allow his Tatar guards to leave his side: Tausan was to mobilize the loyal vassals along his line of march.

The clash between Yermak and Tausan came by the Tobol. The Cossacks were in fine fettle. It was May, and growing warmer every day. The forests had given place to the steppe. For the first time since they had departed from the Volga they saw once more the wide green plains.

Tausan's battle-cry, "Die for the Prophet!", had little appeal for his troops, since they did not honour this prophet. At the first shot the vassals fled in every direction. Tausan himself, with a small body of Tatars, was taken prisoner.



Yermak gave him the most cordial reception. He could not treat him to koumiss, for he was himself short of it. But he had "fire water," and Tausan himself had sheep, brought by his camp-followers. After the meal the Cossacks showed their involuntary guest how their muskets could shoot. They told him meanwhile that there was an army forty times their strength following them on foot. When Tausan had been sufficiently impressed, Yermak set him free with his troops. "Go to Kuchum," he said, "and tell him that our army is beyond count. Let him submit, and we will spill no blood."

Kuchum, however, was not of the sort that submit. When he learned of Tausan's defeat he set to work to organize his defence. He sent orders to mobilize to all his vassals. These orders were conveyed in the form of arrows with gilded tips. All details were transmitted by word of mouth.

The spell of Kuchum, the formidable and invincible descendant of Genghis Khan and heir of the Golden Horde, was still strong. The vassals streamed to his support with their men. The first to come were the Tatars from the Baraba steppe. These were followed by the other tribes and "tongues"—Gulei Mursa came from Nogai, and Prince Yanbysh, and also Prince Bardak and Prince Nemcha and Prince Binei and Prince Obak and Prince Umak: they all came.

Kuchum greeted this numerous army. Of the doubts he felt in his heart he told no one. Every day he interrogated spies and fugitives, and he had discussions not only with the mullahs but with the shamans. He heard some strange things. In the north, beyond the Pelym, a pillar of fire reaching up to the sky had been seen. In the fiery heavens a fearful battle had been fought, and the tumult had lasted all through the night. Yet other things had been seen: a great white bear had fought with a small black one, and the small bear had killed the big white one, but this bear had come to life again three days later. But who was the white bear and who the black? Ay, that was the question.

The fugitives, however, had to justify their flight, as always, and so they piled on the agony. Every one of them had seen Yermak face to face; he was so strange and wonderful and so terrifying that it was impossible to tell of him without weeping.

Clearly these accounts made an impression, for Kuchum formed an expeditionary army, set his son Mahmetkul at the head of it, and sent it against Yermak; he, for his part, began fortifying his city of Isker. Where his brother Mahmetkul was at this time is unknown.

This time, for his son, Kuchum provided reliable Tatar troops. The armies met at the old Tatar settlement of Badassan, on the Tobol. The battle lasted the whole day, and in the end the

Cossacks succeeded in escaping down the Tobol only thanks to the circumstance that the enemy had no boats. The enemy followed, however, close upon Yermak's boats, along the shore, and at every crag the Cossacks passed they were rained upon with arrows.

When Mahmetkul saw that, in spite of his persistent attacks, he could not prevent the Cossacks from travelling on, he returned with his army to his father at Isker. Yermak came upon a big Tatar settlement and captured it. By now August had come, and the Cossacks had grown thoroughly tired of journeying by water and living on fish and roasted oats while along the banks they could see teams of horses, and meadows, and here and there tilled fields.

This settlement was governed by a vassal of Kuchum, a certain Karacha. As always, the vassal had offered little resistance and had been defeated; the Cossacks rested for a time on his property and transferred to their boats and rafts everything they could get hold of.

Where the Tobol flows into the Irtysh, Mahmetkul waited with his main force for Yermak. Yermak was too weak to defend himself; accordingly he went over to the offensive. He landed his whole force and attacked Mahmetkul on the bank. The Tatars fled.

This battle took place on October 1, 1582. It was necessary for Yermak to decide on his course. Winter was approaching. Whither should he turn? He was at the confluence of the Tobol and the Irtysh. Farther down the Irtysh lay the regions for the sake of which the expedition had been undertaken. Yet farther, by the Ob, was the Ugrian land—Mangaseya!

Up the Irtysh was Kuchum, entrenched in his camp. Beyond him were Tatar agriculturists. These people had settled habitations; it would be possible to winter among them. They were visited by the Bokharan merchants, thanks to whom the world flourished.

Yermak turned to the right and went upstream to tackle Kuchum.

It was still early in October when the Cossacks arrived outside Kuchum's fortified camp. Not far away was an abandoned settlement. The Cossacks took possession of it. In front of them lay Kuchum's fortifications and his hordes.

The Cossacks allowed some weeks to pass. They had long lost their good spirits. The last struggles had cost them many killed. Many had been wounded and had still to be brought back to vigour. The resistance of the Tatars was growing continually stronger. It had not so far been possible to inflict a decisive defeat on Kuchum's son, and what likelihood was there of

defeating the father? Yet to winter here without first gaining the victory would mean freezing to death. The time had come for retreat.

All this was put to the war council by Matvei Meshcheryak. The other hetmans were silent.

Yermak faced the recalcitrant Cossacks. "Have you realized," he said, "that across the Urals the voyevod of Perm is waiting to string up every man of us?"

"Better hang than be starved to death."

"I will hold no man back," said Yermak. "Those who will, let them go home. But tomorrow I am attacking Kuchum. I am going to winter in Isker. There are Tataresses there who will mend our shirts for us."

"Right," said Mitya Britoussov, brightening up wonderfully. "It's no go without Tataresses. Our shirts are all in rags. We simply must have Tataresses."

This strategical argument won over the war council. In the evening the Cossacks prepared for combat, united in the opinion that the campaign was a pure impossibility without Tataresses.

Meanwhile Kuchum discussed the plan of battle with his commanders, distributed his troops among his sons, and inquired of mullahs and shamans as to the auspices of the fight. The answer he received was that the bear would jump on the stag's back and the stag would carry him toward the sun—to the sublime shaman who sat on a throne of ice in front of a wall of fire.

Thoughtfully Kuchum stroked his saffron-dyed beard, and he sent messengers to the settlements around with the command to bring all the many women living there to Isker. The rest of the night he spent praying to Allah.

On the morning of October 23 the Cossacks proceeded to storm the Tatar's fortified camp. They had first to carry an earthen rampart and then a palisade. The Tatars defended themselves energetically. The front line was commanded by Crown Prince Mahmetkul. He left the rampart and himself went out to the attack. There was a hand-to-hand struggle. Who can say how it would have ended if at the critical moment Mahmetkul had not been wounded? His immediate entourage just succeeded in getting him into a boat and rowing him across to the other bank of the Irtysh.

When the vassal princes saw this, they fled in haste from the battlefield. They did not even try to retire behind the rampart, but simply made for home. The Cossacks broke into the camp, and Kuchum with his train and the remnants of his army rode wildly away.

The white bear had beaten the black bear, and the stag was running toward the sun. Arrived at Isker, Kuchum appreciated

the wisdom he had shown in commanding that all the women should be brought thither. He rounded them up and took them with him, farther south.

In this combat the Cossacks lost a hundred and seven men. Yermak's troop was dwindling seriously. He had no more than five hundred men left. In front of him, however, lay the abandoned Isker, and Kuchum no longer had any forces at call.

Yermak had conquered Siberia.

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Isker, the "capital," was nothing more than a big village. It had houses of timber and clay. But, to the general disappointment, very few Tataresses were found in them. On the other hand, there were plenty of furs and carpets. The tribal chiefs of the Ostyaks assured Yermak of their entire submission, and bound themselves to pay him the same tribute that they had paid to Kuchum. Food supplies for the troop were furnished by the Ostyaks and the Tatars in the neighbourhood.

Kuchum had fled. Yermak was Tsar of Siberia. There was nothing to prevent him from acting as others had done before him—returning to Russia with booty, announcing the incorporation of a new territory in the Russian Empire, and leaving all else to the Tsar. No one would have demanded more of him. But Yermak was a true conqueror. He wanted to maintain permanent hold of the new territory. For this he needed Moscow's aid in the form of the "legalization" of his position in Siberia. He also needed material aid—men and arms. His reserve of powder was exhausted. His fishing-nets were badly bitten by a native water-beetle, which evidently ate hemp with the same appreciation with which the Ostyaks ate fish.

Very soon Yermak had a reminder from the Tatars that his position at Isker was not assured. A troop of twenty Cossacks had gone up the Irtysh to catch fish. They had thrown out their nets and gone to sleep. Not far from them Mahmetkul, recovered from his wounds, was on the prowl. At night he crept up to the sleeping Cossacks—and they woke no more.

The moment Yermak learned of this he set out in pursuit of the Tatars. Some of them followed his Cossacks into eternal sleep; but the rest, and Mahmetkul himself, escaped.

From those Tatars who were friendly to him, Yermak soon learned where Mahmetkul was living. The fact is worth dwelling on—Yermak had acquired friends among the Tatars! That says much. As a chronicler remarks, "The good-hearted Tataresses played no small part in this."

Yermak sent out a body of men who fell upon Mahmetkul as he

had fallen on the Cossacks. They massacred almost all the Tatars, but Mahmetkul they bound and brought to Isker to Yermak as a prisoner.

Yermak might have regarded this as a good opportunity for taking revenge for his murdered fishermen. Instead of this, he received Mahmetkul with a guard of honour, greeted him as a prince, and promised him, in the name of the Tsar of Russia, "most gracious treatment." Yermak had not the slightest authority for such promises. But he had taken the right course, as the future was to show.

Kuchum grieved at his son's capture. He had no doubt what Mahmetkul's fate would be. After a few days, however, a messenger reached him from his son, sent by agreement with Yermak, and announced that his son was alive and well and wanted for nothing; but that he asked his father not to fall upon Yermak's provision-bringers, for in that case his own—the Crown Prince's—food supply would suffer seriously.

Having achieved security from this quarter, Yermak made arrangements for his mission to Moscow. He selected a reliable man to send. Ivan Kolzo, although he had been condemned to death at Moscow, accepted the mission. The risk was great. But so also was the prospective gain. Late in the autumn he set out with a small party of Cossacks on the way to Moscow.

His route lay through the Stroganovs' territory. There he parted from his bodyguard, who had urgent need for a talk with the Stroganov sempstresses about the preparation of new flags. Maxim Stroganov did not hinder the hetman on his journey: he had his reasons. Soon after Yermak's departure there had been a fresh enemy onslaught on the Stroganovs' possessions. The Cossacks had gone southward, and the attack came from the north. The new prince of Pelym, the perfidious Bekbelei, was the shameless intruder. But he was given a rough reception. This time all the Stroganovs were united; after the Tsar's command Nikita no longer dared to attempt such subterfuges as calling upon the Lord, but himself came with his auxiliaries to Maxim. And uncle Semyon, too, had joined in.

Bekbelei would have done better to stop at home at Pelym! He was pursued, driven into a defile, and there attacked; his whole force was cut up, and he himself wounded and taken prisoner; soon afterwards he died in captivity.

The Stroganovs had thus acted impeccably. Yet they were denounced from Perm. The voyevod Pelepelizyn reported to Moscow that the Stroganovs were disturbing the native population and upsetting his whole policy; they were continually asking for help, but sending their own people away, God alone knew whither. The consequences were plain to see: first Prince Bekbelei's

attack and now a rising of the Cheremisses, with which the voyevod himself was unable to cope.

Such reports always brought a ready response from Tsar Ivan; apart from that, there was pessimism in Moscow: the Cheremisses' rising was in truth formidable; the war with the Swedes was going badly—it was a cheerless outlook.

The Tsar sent a letter to the Stroganovs with a black seal and black contents. He recounted all the Stroganovs' misdeeds. "Traitors!" he wrote. "Your neighbours you exasperate, and you are creating discord between me and the Sultan of Siberia. You have given admittance to robbers, to the very men who have set Moscow at variance with the Nogaiers and have made the Volga unsafe!" And for the first time the Tsar named Yermak Timofeyevich, calling him the foremost "robber" and "traitor." Yermak and his men must be recalled immediately and sent to help the voyevod! If this were not done, the Stroganovs would be in danger of extreme disgrace, and Yermak and his crew in danger of the gallows.

When Maxim Stroganov had read this missive he scratched his neck; then he sent for his cousin Nikita and his uncle Semyon. Something had to be done—but what? Could they appease the Tsar with mere words?

"See what you have done!" said Nikita as he dismounted. "I always said there would be trouble, and you would not listen. That's what your Siberia has brought us!"

Siberia, however, had actually come to them at that moment. It was brought by Ivan Kolzo, Don Cossack and Volga pirate, with Yermak's compliments. When the hetman appeared before Maxim, the latter at once saw how matters stood. He fed and put up the Cossack, gave him money for his expenses, and sent him off to Moscow.

For a long time Ivan had been as gloomy as a thundercloud. But when Kolzo dropped on his knee before him and laid Kuchum's empire at his feet, and in addition 2,400 sables, 50 beavers, and 20 black foxes—Ivan brightened up.

After Ivan, all the boyars at court brightened. And after the boyars the whole court. And after the court the people of Moscow. Very soon the Stroganovs also brightened up, when a courier reached them from their "observer" at the Kremlin.

Only Yermak did not brighten, for he was still at Isker, cultivating the friendship of the petty tribal princes, hunting, calculating how much powder he still had, and feeling certain that he could not hold out much longer. Meanwhile he had sent his patrols far to the north, down the Ob. All this was freshly conquered territory, and it was essential, if he was to hold it, that he should make a show of power—and he had none to show.

Kolzo's return was a great satisfaction to Yermak, and at the same time a great disappointment. Kolzo brought from the Tsar a full pardon—all the past was forgiven and forgotten. He brought Yermak a fur from the Tsar's own shoulders, a silver drinking-bowl, and two precious suits of armour. He further reported that the voyevod Prince Bolkhovsky and three hundred guards were being sent to Yermak's aid. The prince was bringing powder, lead, and all other stores.

"Voyevod—prince?" Yermak knitted his brows. "What do we want with a prince? We have princes enough here already—even a Crown Prince!"

"The Crown Prince is to be sent at once, by the Tsar's command, to Moscow. The prince is sent as voyevod of Siberia."

This news gave no particular pleasure to Yermak. With a heavy heart he sent Mahmetkul to Moscow. That meant that Kuchum no longer had any incentive to keep the peace.

And, indeed, Kuchum set to work at once. Yermak's provision-carriers were once more exposed to assaults. The tributes in furs which he had imposed on Kuchum's ex-vassal came in more and more irregularly. Yermak demanded an explanation from Karacha, who replied that he was himself unable to get the furs as the Kirghizes were attacking him. He begged for a small body of auxiliaries.

Yermak sent Kolzo to him with forty Cossacks. Karacha was not to be trusted, but Kolzo would keep his eyes open.

Karacha, however, lured Kolzo into an ambush. Kolzo fell, stabbed with a poniard. Of his forty Cossacks only one escaped.

It was the worst blow Yermak had suffered in Siberia. He felt now his entire isolation in this measureless, unknown, sinister country.

His prestige with the surrounding princes fell. His force was growing steadily less. He had now little more than three hundred men. Karacha was regarded by the Tatars as a hero. He assembled a force of Tatars, Vogules, and Ostyaks, surrounded Isker on all sides, and proceeded to blockade the town. The siege lasted nearly three months. The Cossacks were on the verge of exhaustion. Every musket-loading was counted. Then, one night, when Karacha had already made preparations for his triumphal entry into Isker, Yermak led out the whole of his Cossacks, threw himself upon Karacha's forces, and annihilated them. Karacha was punished for his perfidy: two of his sons were killed.

It may be that it was the loss of his sons that fired Karacha with a last spark of energy. He collected his scattered horde and himself fell upon the Cossacks on the following day. The new battle brought him a fresh defeat. "Countless dead bodies lay

on the battlefield," say the chroniclers of Siberia. In reality there fell in this second encounter about one hundred men on the Tatar side; Yermak lost about two dozen of his troop.

Once more the tribal princes rallied to Yermak. They saw that he was invincible. They did not know that in this last struggle the Cossacks had literally shot away the last of their powder. Yermak, however, was finding the situation much too hot for him. Where was the promised voyevod from Moscow? Yermak had now been almost three years in Siberia. The land had been conquered, but kept having to be conquered over again. It had submitted to him, but it remained alien and unreliable.

Yermak went to meet the voyevod. On the way he collected tribute of furs from his Vogule "subjects." Then he stopped. To go on meant to go away for good. That meant giving up the game. Yermak returned to Isker.

But what had the voyevod Bolkhovsky been doing? He was the descendant of a long line of voyevods and boyars, and would have been an unexceptionable State official anywhere in civilization—at Kaluga, say, or Ryazan. But it took him a whole year to get as far as the Chusovaya. There, on orders from Moscow, the Stroganovs gave him fifty mounted men from their establishment. This arrangement of the Moscow bureaucrats was his undoing. It was impossible to make progress with horses in winter through the snowdrifts, or in spring through the floods; and in summer, instead of moving rapidly downstream, the difficult journey had to be forced along the rocky banks. Not until the spring of 1584 did Bolkhovsky cross the Urals. He reached Isker without horses, without supplies, with heavy losses of men, and himself seriously ill. He brought powder, but he also brought scurvy. Soon after his arrival he died of it. The command over the guards passed to the voyevod Glukhov.

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Yermak had done his work. He had raised the turnpike and opened the road into Siberia for the voyevod. He had fulfilled his historic task, and now he went to his destruction.

Up to then he had been cautious and calculating. He had not made a single strategic or political mistake. He had had a sure flair for the right direction, and had taken it, and for the chief enemy, and had beaten him; he had not allowed himself to be led astray by irrelevant things. And now, toward the end of the summer of 1584, this wise Yermak proceeded up the Irtysh in search of certain Bokharan merchants. Not to plunder them; on the contrary, he wanted to liberate them from Kuchum's clutches. He felt himself already to be the representative of Moscow and the upholder of the State in Siberia. He was thinking about trade



with Bokhara. He remained loyal to the end. Caught in the toils of his loyalty, he let the whole summer go by.

Finding no one on the Irtysh, he turned back after a few days. The Cossacks, tired by the labour of rowing upstream, begged for rest. They moored alongside a small island and pitched their tents. Only a narrow arm of the river separated them from the bank. The night was stormy, with torrential rain. The Cossacks quickly set up their tents, crept beneath them, and fell asleep. Yermak, too, slept.

That night Kuchum fell upon the encampment, and of the party of Cossacks only one man returned to Isker. That night, August 4-5, 1584, was Yermak's last. The exact circumstances of his death are unknown. Tradition has it that he tried to swim across the narrow reach of the river, but his armour—the Tsar's gift—weighed him down, and he was drowned.

It is impossible to establish the truth of this story of the armour. But it has an underlying moral. Fortune turned away from Yermak the moment he became the Tsar's man. So long as he had been a "robber" and had acted at his own peril he was victorious. But when his pardon arrived and he became a loyal subject, the Tsar's armour dragged him to destruction.

Some decades after his death a Mongol chieftain, who had done a service to the Russian Government, appeared before the voyevod of Tobolsk and asked his assistance in procuring an old suit of armour that belonged to a Tatar. The Mongol had offered the Tatar ten slave families and a thousand sheep for the armour, but the Tatar would not come to terms. He said he did not want to give up the armour, because it had miraculous virtues.

The voyevod came to the assistance of the chieftain, and induced the Tatar to part with the suit of armour. The Tatar accepted the slaves and the sheep, and thereafter the Mongol, feeling that the possession of the armour rendered him unconquerable, deemed it no longer necessary to perform services for the Russian Government.

This was Yermak's suit of armour. Probably it now lies in some hero's grave, and it may be that the spade of some archaeologist will some day turn it up. That done, it may, of course, be demonstrated that it was not Yermak's armour. But the legend lives and will endure. It has lived already for three and a half centuries; it arose out of the deeds a man accomplished in three years. From those three years sprang the whole subsequent history of Siberia.

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## Chapter 11

### KUCHUM'S END

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**Y**ERMAK was dead. But his Cossacks were still in Isker. In addition to them, the Moscow guards were there. In all there were four hundred men. That was a really formidable body. Only there was no second Yermak.

When the one surviving Cossack reached Isker and told what had happened on that fatal night of August 4-5, the whole garrison of Isker embarked on its boats and rafts and, with Glukhov and Meshcheryak at its head, turned homeward. Now Meshcheryak had an opportunity to demonstrate his familiarity with Cossack manners and customs. During its retreat Yermak's troop became an unbridled pack of brigands. The one concern of Cossacks and guards alike was to see that they did not return home empty-handed. They sent detachments to the surrounding hamlets and demanded the surrender of furs, although this tribute had already been paid to Yermak. They did this even with the Tatars on their heels. Very soon the Tatars fell upon them, but unsuccessfully. In this affray, however, the bold, bad Matvei Meshcheryak came to his end—the last of Yermak's hetmans. In the autumn of 1584 the Russians abandoned Siberia.

But where was Kuchum? Was not Isker, evacuated by the Russians, now open to him? Did not Siberia belong to him once more? Kuchum did not venture, however, to return from the steppe into the forest country. His enemy had fallen. Mahmetkul was avenged. But Kuchum remained in the steppe. His son Alei took possession of Isker.

It seemed as if Russia had played her last card in Siberia. Yet Yermak's work remained: whatever else had happened, he had raised the turnpike! It was substantially easier to conquer Siberia a second time. The Tatars themselves helped the Russians to do so: there was no end to their internecine quarrels. Alei had scarcely established himself in Isker when he was pounced upon by Seidak, a nephew of Etiger, the sultan whom Kuchum had overthrown and murdered. Seidak had long been collecting forces in Bokhara in order to enforce his legitimate right to the throne of Siberia. Alei was driven out of Isker, and fled to his father in the steppe country. From the steppe the two gathered strength and fresh combativeness.

In Moscow, meanwhile, the people had buried and mourned their terrible Tsar. On the throne sat now the weak Theodore

Ivanovich, but the real ruler was Boris Godunov. The enterprise started by the Stroganovs and Yermak came now into his hands. Boris got his claws firmly into Siberia.

Before it was known what had happened to Bolkhovsky and Yermak, he resolved to send them reinforcements. In 1585 the voyevod Mansurov crossed the Urals with a hundred musketeers. Mansurov was wiser than Bolkhovsky had been: he refused to take horses, and demanded snowshoes, axes, ropes, and—by Godunov's express order—a cannon. It was the first cannon in Siberia. It did much to raise Russian prestige, which had suffered seriously since Yermak's death.

When he reached the confluence of the Tobol and the Irtysh, Mansurov learned that he had not come to reinforce Yermak in a conquered Siberia, but to conquer the country over again. The Vogules and Ostyaks whom he met on the way all told one and the same tale: the "great man" had perished, and the little ones had fled quickly, quickly. The Tatars had driven them along the river and had rained arrows on them; and behind them all had stridden an ancient man with an iron stick; with this he had struck the ground, so that the water quivered and welled up, and all the "little men" fell into it.

Mansurov decided not to do as Yermak had done and move up the Irtysh with his hundred men, but to go downstream—to the weak Ostyaks, to Ugría and Mangaseya, where the furs were. He did not get far, as winter set in. He took up winter quarters.

But there is no subjugation without a legend. After Yermak's downfall even the Ostyaks had lost all respect for the fire-lightnings. They fell upon Mansurov and fought him for two days. Only when the cannon thundered and smashed their idols did it dawn upon them that the "ancient" with his iron stick did not only strike at the Cossacks but sometimes at Ostyaks. They fled. And then their tribal chief came and declared his submission.

Meanwhile the news of what had happened in Siberia at last reached Moscow. The good-natured Tsar Theodore did not have Glukhov executed when he told the Tsar of his heroic deeds and explained his withdrawal. In view of the extremely unfavourable strategic situation, said Glukhov, he had had to retire. He was careful, too, to dwell upon Yermak's "intrigues": Yermak, he said, had absolutely refused to come to the aid of Bolkhovsky's guards and had sent Bolkhovsky to his death.

Besides, Glukhov had succeeded, in spite of everything, in bringing a respectable consignment of furs from Siberia, and even a petty tribal princelet, who fell on his face in the presence of the Tsar and promised him in the name of all the peoples and races of Siberia true loyalty and loyal tribute.

Glukhov's narrative was accepted, and the furs with it, and he

was commanded to return without delay to Siberia. All Yermak's Cossacks were ordered to go with him. A new division of three hundred guards was dispatched as reinforcements to Mansurov, commanded by the voyevod Ssukin.

Ssukin was aware that in the country between Tobol and Irtysh Kuchum and his son Alei were roaming from place to place, and that Seidak was entrenched in Isker. Not far away a certain Kirghiz "sultan" was on the move, and, finally, the perfidious Karacha had not forgotten the death of his two sons. He, too, was not very far away. There were enemies enough, and each of them had his horde. Ssukin accordingly did not proceed up the Irtysh, but fortified Tyumen, on the Tura, on the site of the old Tatar town in which Yermak had passed his first Siberian winter.

This camp was the first of a long series of similar fortified settlements in Siberia—little "ostrogs" or strongholds which steadily nailed Siberia to the Muscovite empire.

In the following year, 1587, a new voyevod came to Siberia—Danila Chulkov. He brought with him a body of five hundred men. He was furnished with cannon and horses and all necessary stores. Boris Godunov's interest in Siberia was constantly growing. The medicinal herbs which "Dr" Yakov Stroganov had sown on his wounds were growing up in Siberia as "ostrogs"!

Chulkov penetrated farther than Ssukin had done. At the confluence of Tobol and Irtysh he built the new ostrog of Tobolsk, not far from Isker. There he entrenched himself. But he did not attempt any further warfare against the Tatars. He exerted himself instead to arrive at some sort of understanding with them.

Only sixteen versts from him, a little over ten miles, at Isker, was Seidak. Seidak had now entered into friendly relations with that wandering Kirghiz sultan and with Karacha. This situation suited Chulkov perfectly, and he capitalized it in a way of his own.

He invited Seidak, Karacha, and the "sultan" to have a talk with him. The allies came with a following of a hundred men. They were hospitably entertained and banqueted. The chronicles report, with admiration of Chulkov's acuteness, that during the meal he observed that each time his guests were offered wine they were unable to drain their goblets without spluttering and choking. It might have been thought that the obvious explanation of this must be that the Tatars could not easily drink the Russian "wine" because it was not wine but the fiercest vodka: men accustomed to koumiss would naturally find it very difficult to swallow. Chulkov, however, shrewdly saw in this nothing less than the finger of God pointing at the guilty conscience of the Tatars. "That is the sort of men you are!" he thundered; "that is what you have on your escutcheon—deceit, treachery!"

The "traitors" were at once bound and their followers disarmed and made prisoner. One or two succeeded in escaping and bearing to headquarters the news of what had happened. Headquarters, thoroughly persuaded of the acuteness of their enemy, hastened to evacuate Isker and to go in search of new deeds of daring in some other quarter.

Isker was free—the capital and the throne of Kuchum were the victors' for the taking. Three years after Yermak's death his work had been completed again.

But the day of deeds of daring was past. The Russian realm now rolled into Siberia and applied its weight without impediment. Thus pressed back, the fiery wall of the Great Shaman retired farther and farther northward and eastward. Isker had already lost all interest; Chulkov simply ignored it. Instead, he fortified Tobolsk, and built storehouses and barracks there. He treated his captives with generosity: they deserved an exemplary punishment for their "treachery," but no matter; he sent them unharmed to Moscow.

That was a shrewd bit of psychological calculation. One after another the Siberian rulers were sent to distant, mysterious Moscow, to the mighty, legendary White Tsar. They did not end their days with a dagger-thrust, as was the more normal, more simple, more obvious practice of Siberia. They lived on beyond the Urals, in the white city of the White Tsar, a white and legendary life.

In Moscow the captives suffered not the slightest harm. They were flattered and pensioned and presented with landed estates; they were converted to Christianity and taught the art of drinking vodka without spluttering and choking.

Together with the captives Chulkov sent to Moscow the news that Siberia as far as the Ob and the Irtysh, with all its princes, sultans, and chieftains, was in his power. Moscow sent him its thanks for the cheerful news and commissioned him to supply it annually with two hundred thousand sables, ten thousand black foxes, and half a million squirrels.

So began the economic development of Siberia.

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Expansion northward and eastward proceeded rapidly. Southward it met with more difficulty. The road to the south was still blocked by Kuchum.

He had lost Isker, he had lost his son, who had been kidnapped to Moscow. He was pursued by the Muscovite voyevod, by the vengeful Seidak, by the perjured Kirghizes. And still he did not give up. In the summer of 1591, in the ninth year of his homeless wandering, he was cornered by the voyevod Prince Kolzov-

Mossalsky beside the river Ishim; he was defeated, and his son Abdul-Khair and two of his wives were taken prisoner. This son and the two women were conveyed in their turn across the Urals to White Moscow. Kuchum retired farther south. He still had many sons and many wives.

In 1594 the new ostrog Tara was built in the middle of the Tatar districts that still remained true to Kuchum. Here the voyevod Yeletsky established himself. He had been commissioned to make an end of the Kuchum business. For this purpose some twelve hundred horsemen and over five hundred foot-soldiers were sent to Tara. They included Muscovite guards, Polish and Lithuanian prisoners, Ukrainians, Bashkirs, Tatars, and the remains of Yermak's old guard. Prince Yeletsky was required finally to destroy Kuchum or else to induce him to sign a peace. If, said his instructions, Kuchum would recognize the overlordship of the Tsar of Muscovy, the old enmity would be entirely forgotten and he would be granted the title of a Khan of Siberia. The voyevod had this proposal communicated to Kuchum. Kuchum replied: "An eagle of the steppe will not put up with a dog-kennel."

He was now an old man. In 1595 he had been thirteen years in the wilderness, wandering, fighting, his property gone, his subjects and his sons lost. The voyevods stopped at nothing. Kuchum was powerless; he had scarcely a follower left, and his resources were exhausted. But so long as the eagle of the steppe circled above Siberia the servants of the Tsar could not sleep in safety. Whole bodies of troops were after him. Everywhere there were ambushes; Tatars were caught and interrogated as to his movements. If they gave no information, their tongues were loosed by the old Moscow methods; under the torture the Tatars began to talk. Thus the voyevods learned of a place where Kuchum's son Alei was encamped alongside the deep Lake Usiuk, with a horde of two hundred men; two days' journey farther on, by the Irtysh, Kuchum himself had taken up position.

Prince Yeletsky sent a detachment of two hundred and seventy men against Alei. It included a hundred guards, sixty of them Lithuanians and forty Cossacks. The whole detachment was splendidly armed, though only the guards had muskets. Once more the fire arrows proved stronger than the wooden ones. Alei was defeated.

Another detachment attacked Kuchum. His camp was set on fire, and he himself put to flight with a handful of faithful followers. It was March, and the snows were melting; pursuit was impossible. A few days later there came voluntarily to Prince Yeletsky in Tara Kuchum's old wife, the mother of Mahmetkul, with his counsellor Chin-Mursa and thirty-eight Tatars; they declared that they were no longer willing to wander aimlessly with the old

eagle over the steppe. Within the walls of the ostrog, in the Russian dog-kennel, it was warm, and there was food to eat.

All the tribes, all the vassals, had already declared their submission to the new lords. The envoys Kuchum sent out rode with their messages straight to the nearest Russian voyevod. The voyevods on their part sent envoys to him with promises of wealth and titles and of the Tsar's pardon. The old eagle answered with one word—"Never!"

Fame and health and fortune had left him. The days grew dim and his eyes could no longer greet, at the hour of morning prayer, the red riders on their golden horses in the sky. He lost his sight.

After two more years he deigned, in answer to a fresh invitation, to send a written reply to the voyevod—for the first time after fifteen years:

"God is great!

"The free man Tsar Kuchum offers greeting to the boyar.

"Of what do you want to talk with me? Have you orders from your ruler, the white prince? If you have orders, I am ready for a talk.

"This is my word: I ask the Grand Duke to leave me the land beyond the Irtysh.

"But of you voyevods I ask this: Two men were on their way to me, but the great God has given them into your hands. That which they were bringing me, you took; keep it. I ask you only one thing: my eyes are sick; those envoys brought healing herbs. I ask you for these! Since Yermak's arrival I have not broken my word. I have not given you Siberia—you have taken it yourselves.

"Now I am ready to conclude peace. Send envoys—let us talk one with another."

Old eagle with pinions shot away! At last he agreed to "talk." He humbled himself so far as to make a request—for the sake of the sunlight, without which life is not worth living.

From the Kremlin there came a long reply. The Tsar enumerated all Kuchum's crimes against Moscow. He reminded him that he, Kuchum, had now been at war for sixteen years with the constitutional Government of Siberia, and had craftily instigated the natives against the Russian Tsar, to whom Siberia had come as a rightful inheritance from his forefathers. For Ivan III himself had been overlord of the Ugrian land; and Ivan procreated Vassily, and Vassily procreated Ivan IV, and Ivan IV Theodore; and Theodore, if he did not procreate Boris Godunov, did nevertheless espouse his sister. Notwithstanding this, the Tsar was ready to forgive Kuchum in the greatness of his heart.

"Show thyself in Moscow! If thou wilt serve me, I will reward thee, I will give thee villages and towns, as befits thy rank. If

thou wilt not—thou mayest retire to Siberia; I give thee back the city of Isker; live there as a loyal subject.”

It was a wonderfully composed missive. The only thing that is incomprehensible is why the mighty and magnificent Tsar of Moscow wasted so many words on a homeless, destitute, and unserviceable old man.

Together with the Tsar's letter came one from the captive Abdul-Khair to his father Kuchum. Abdul wrote that he and his brother Mahmetkul were living splendidly in captivity, that all struggle was vain, and that there was only one recourse for his father—to go to Moscow.

With the two letters came herbs for the sick eyes. But they were no longer of any avail for the old man.

Why should he go to his sons? He could no longer see them.

The new voyevod of Tara, Voyerikov, set out with redoubled energy to capture Kuchum. In these days, the last of his life, the Tsar of Siberia was still formidable. Though he was now entirely blind, he went southward to the Baraba steppe, and there collected a new army. With a last wild energy he led it himself to Tara. Next him rode his son Alei. He came up to Voyerikov's troops and gave battle. He remembered the old days of Yermak. In seventeen years of fighting the Tatars had learnt not to be afraid of the thunder of the guns. The fighting went on from sunrise to midday.

On the battlefield lay Kuchum's brother Iliten, and his son Kanai, and two grandsons—the sons of Alei—and one-and-twenty princes of the blood, and some hundred and fifty horsemen.

A hundred Tatars tried to escape by swimming across the Ob. The Cossacks fired on them. Few reached the farther bank. The wounded and the prisoners were massacred.

There were captured alive and sent to Moscow: the sons of Kuchum, the Siberian princes Amanak (thirty years old), Shaim (twenty), Bibadja (eight), Molla (four), Koumysh (one year); the wives of Kuchum, Siberian princesses, eight in all, with eight of their daughters; also the wife of Alei with her little four-year-old son Yansuyer, and the widow of Kanai with her daughter Navrusbek; Kuchum's son-in-law, and four Tatar princes who had remained loyal to him.

In the name of the Tsar it was declared to all of these that “Tsar Kuchum had sinned grievously against the Russian Tsar, and for that reason God had dealt with him; but the Russian Tsar was merciful and would not punish them with death, but granted them a life free from care.”

Boris Godunov kept his promise. He was himself half a Tatar and eagle's scion, and he had compassion on the young eagles. Their life in Moscow was arranged, they were given “warm dwellings” and clothed in “bright raiment of velvet and silk,”



and they were supplied from the palace storerooms with "apples, raisins, grapes, saffron, and crushed pepper."

Kuchum hid in the forests by the lower Ob. With his three remaining sons and thirty loyal followers he journeyed downstream. He did not regain the steppe. Voyerikov sent Tatars to find him. They found him and told him that the Tsar regarded the war as ended and had commanded that he should be invited to join his wives and sons, free of all restrictions, and not as a captive but as a guest.

Kuchum's answer was: "I did not come when I was a man. Now I am blind, deaf, and old. I will die on my land."

He looked up with his unseeing eyes at the envoys, and with his aged fingers he stroked his saffron-yellow beard. "Even my son Amanak has been taken from me. Why? I would have given all my wives and children for him. You ought to give me back Amanak."

He resolved to make his way to the Nogaiers. At night, when he reached the Tatar camp, he was hurriedly given food and asked to go his way. Some kind soul gave him a fur.

It was late autumn. He was alone, a King Lear with a dyed beard. "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks!"

It was no joy to the Nogaiers to receive him. They all knew his story, and all were tired of his battles. The Nogaiers feared that Kuchum might be followed by the voyevods. Besides, the "free man" had old enemies among them.

They waited their opportunity, and in the winter of 1598, somewhere beyond the Ishim, they killed him.

# PASSIONS

## Chapter 12

### TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ON

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KUCHUM'S death freed Moscow from some juridical problems, and the fur collectors from some anxieties. Moscow was working to cut the ground from under the feet of any remaining Siberian "legitimists," and accordingly life in Russia was made pleasant for Kuchum's children. The daughters were married to young boyars; the sons were given titles and offices. Alei's son received the whole town of Kassimov, on the Oka, with the title of a "Tsar of Kassimov." He married an eminent boyar's daughter; his children ranked equally with the most aristocratic boyar families. Under Peter the Great his family died out.

Altanai, another of Kuchum's sons, founded the line of the Princes Sibirsky. It was a wealthy and highly placed family. In the seventies of the last century Kuchum's last descendant in this line was engaged as an official in one of the Ministries at St Petersburg.

Nevertheless, the magic of Kuchum's name continued for a long time to be potent in Siberia. In the seventeenth century rising after rising took place in the name of his clan. Even in death he robbed the Muscovite voyevods of sleep for a whole century.

But, no matter how many Tatars, Vogules, and Ostyaks might still rebel, no matter how many descendants of Kuchum might still stand out for their rights, Siberia had been opened to colonization and belonged to the Russians. That was the view of the Moscow Government, and of the voyevods and merchants, and of the Cossacks and tramps.

It must especially have been the view of the descendants of Anika Stroganov. They had, in any case, no less right than the Tsar of Muscovy to look, if not upon all Siberia, at least upon Mangaseya as their own!

It seemed for a time as if the Stroganovs had become the lords of Siberia. The territory conquered by Yermak beyond the Urals was considered at first to be their property. Soon, however, they had to draw back. When the voyevods reached Mangaseya, none of the Stroganovs succeeded in upholding his special rights there. The first detachments of troops were followed into Mangaseya by such a stream of adventurers and merchants that the Stroganovs would in any case have been unable to maintain any rights of monopoly against the intruders.

But the thing that was impossible for the Stroganovs was equally impossible for anyone else. The only power that could set up monopolistic claims was the State. For the State the precious furs of Mangaseya played the same part as later the gold of the Urals and the silver of the Altai mountains. They were its internationally accepted currency. With these furs Moscow paid for its purchases abroad; they provided it with gold, of which it had none within its frontiers.

The Government knew the importance of Mangaseya, and as soon as it had established itself in Tobolsk Russian troops proceeded farther north along the Ob. In 1592 a Russian ostrog was built on the ruins of the old capital of the rulers of Pelym. The Prince of Pelym, a former vassal of Kuchum, quickly changed loyalties, receiving in return, instead of a glorious downfall in the cold tundra, a warm and cosy corner provided by the Russian conquerors.

Next year various Ostyak chieftains made their submission to the Tsar of Muscovy. In 1594 the town of Beryosov was founded; at a later period it became the place of banishment of many famous men. Next year the Ostyaks rose and set siege to Beryosov; they would have captured it if the voyevod of Tobolsk had not hastened to its relief.

The troops that had overthrown the rebellious Ostyaks went on northwards and in 1595 founded the town of Obdorsk, at the head of the estuary of the Ob. This brought the whole lower course of the Ob into subjection to Moscow. Here was the Ugrian land. But the voyevods in charge discovered that the real Mangaseya lay farther east, by the river Tas. An expedition was hurriedly equipped in Tobolsk and sent thither. Its members were fallen upon in the tundra by the Samoyeds and almost exterminated. Only a small party succeeded in reaching the Tas. There, in 1600, the town of Mangaseya was founded.

In all this the Stroganovs had no part. They had neither juridical rights nor the practical means for laying hands on the fur El Dorado. It may be that they would nevertheless have tried to do so, but the "time of troubles" had set in—a decade of wars and social disturbances and attacks from without. The Stroganovs took an active part in this struggle. From their northern possessions they sent money and men to Moscow. When the disturbances came to an end, all their rights and privileges were confirmed by Moscow. The Stroganovs decided to content themselves with ten million dessiatines of land in the cis-Ural region.

Forty years after Yermak's campaign beyond the Urals, a good third of the present-day Siberia had been nailed to the Muscovite empire with the strong nails of the ostrogs. Throughout this

gigantic realm the Moscow voyevods and merchants and hordes of Cossacks were actively at work. All were concerned with the subjection of the native population and the collection of tribute. The methods were simple. An armed detachment came to a village and assembled the village elders, and the commander informed them through an interpreter of the amount of tribute they would be required to pay in future. A first collection was made on the spot. If the natives refused to deliver the furs, or produced too few, various sorts of pressure were applied. Their "yurts" (tents) were burnt, their reindeer confiscated. Any who offered resistance were killed. Women and children were taken into captivity.

The "woman question" was always a burning one in Siberia. Even in the nineteenth century the Russian Government sent whole steamer-loads of women offenders for distribution among the exiles and those in charge of them in Sakhalin. Lists were drawn up long before the arrival of the steamer. Those who stood well with the authorities received young women; those without a patron had to content themselves with an older mate. Sometimes a young fellow of twenty-five would be allotted a charmer of well over double his age. The "wild" marriages thus made became as a rule very firm unions, differing little from the "tame," legal ones.

The "marriages" concluded in the first period of the conquest of Siberia had a different character, for the simple reason that the wives were not Russian women but "Asiatics," and, moreover, "unclean pagans." The clergy repeatedly protested against the Russian habit in Siberia of taking away the wives and daughters of the natives and "living with the unbaptized and unconfirmed as with wedded wives." The practice nevertheless endured until toward the end of the eighteenth century. Mitya Britoussov's descendants thought as he had done, that "it's no go without Tataresses." Early Siberian history is full of bold bad doings in this field. The wife of the petty prince Zelenekh was placed in the harem of the voyevod Galkin; the wife of the Kirghiz prince Ishinei was assigned to an unknown gallant. The troops of the voyevod Dubensky seized for themselves scores of Buryat beauties; the voyevod's example was followed by the officials, the Cossacks, the guards, the merchants. Every Cossack had his little harem, and the women were sold or pawned for ten and twenty roubles. Sometimes the price was fixed in furs. At Yeniseisk a Cossack died, leaving a slave-widow. An official, Yaryshkin, took possession of her and sold her for ten sables and ten red foxes to a Tungus named Kevanyi; later Kevanyi sold her for seven sables, four sable hides, and ten red foxes.

What protection had the unfortunate nomads? The only thing

they could do was to migrate farther into the tundra or the forests. They fled when they heard that troops were approaching. The conquerors were forced to introduce some sort of commerce and to offer an equivalent for the furs they wanted. In Siberia it was the regular thing to pay for an iron kettle as many sable furs as it would hold. This was regarded as eminently fair, and every Tungus or Ostyak took it for granted that an iron kettle was a much rarer and more precious thing than a dozen sable or ermine furs.

Even the Russians, however, had no great supply of kettles, and it was no easy matter to bring them to the tundra. It was much better to bring vodka and tobacco. All who had once tasted of these delights were ready to pay for them all the furs they had, and their neighbour's into the bargain. It is an old story, to be read in countless pioneers' reports. What boots it to tell of all the tricks of administrators and all the complaints of the unfortunate natives? They would convey little. Let us give the biography of a man whom chance threw into this country and who set out to make all he could out of Siberian trade.

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The "period of troubles" had brought many uninvited guests to Russia. Most of them were Poles and Lithuanians. In the Polish army that had come to Moscow with Demetrius the False there was a certain Pavel Khmielevsky, one of the lesser nobility, an impudent go-getter with a long moustache, a tremendous appetite, and empty pockets. He was an educated man, proud of his Latin and always quoting from the *Ars Amatoria*. He had entered Moscow with the victors and had installed himself in comfortable quarters in the Kremlin. There he added a little to his financial resources, and enthusiastically pursued the cult of Bacchus and Venus—two deities whose service it is possible, of course, to combine.

This idyllic existence, however, soon came to an end. The Russian troops surrounded Moscow, and in 1612 began the siege of the Kremlin. Confidence diminished at once. Payment of allowances was suspended, and Khmielevsky's finances improved no longer. One dark night he went on his round of supervision of the guards—and was seen no more.

He crossed the Moskva river and made straight for the camp of the Russian boyars. There he gave a mass of information concerning the Polish army, telling things to which the Russians listened with the liveliest interest. He received a lavish reward. After adopting the Orthodox faith "from sincere conviction," and after acquiring further merit by denouncing another Polish deserter, whom he alleged to be intending to betray the Russians, his finances improved marvellously.

Soon there came the decisive battle between the Russians and the Poles. By a daring and clever stroke the Russian centuries, formed by the boyareviches or "sons of the nobility," penetrated into the heart of the Polish troops. The commander of these centuries was a butcher named Minin, of Nizhni-Novgorod; his Chief of Staff was none other than "Pan" Pavel Khmielevsky.

The war came to its end. The new Tsar Michael Romanov established himself on the throne. A splendid career opened before the pan Khmielevsky. He was already a big landowner: he possessed three estates, and a town house in Moscow. This house was graced by the "field flower of his soul," Sophia, a hefty Lithuanian maiden with saucy eyes and with cheeks so red that it was declared that if you spat on them they would hiss.

Khmielevsky's services were known at court. The butcher had been singing his praises everywhere. The pan himself also took care that his services should not be forgotten.

One night, while the pan was telling his boon companions how the King of Poland would cede all Lithuania to the Tsar if he would only give up to him the brave Pan Pavel Khmielevsky, passing Cossack bands drove the whole of the pan's horses from his stables. When Pan Pavel reached home and saw the empty stables, his rage was unbounded. He tugged at his moustache and tugged at his sword, and tried to thrust the sword through his breast; failing to summon the resolution for this, he sat down by the embankment of his house and wept bitterly.

And as misfortunes never come singly, shortly after this the field flower of his soul fled from him. A cheeky black-eyed youngster on the tramp, perhaps the same one who had driven off the horses, carried her off to Vyazma.

What did our hero do? Did he tear off to Vyazma, murder the fellow, burn down his house, recapture Sophia, beat her and kiss her to death? Nothing of the sort. Pan Khmielevsky sat down and set about writing her a letter. "I fall at thy feet, little pet of my heart, stamp on me with thy sweet little boots, I'll beg and pray thy mother to let us be together again." But the flower of the field did not return. She had blown away in a cloud of pollen.

Hard knocks like this were too much for his tender soul. The noble pan screamed and raged and then became dead drunk. He beat his servants unmercifully and nearly killed more than one of them. He fell into deep melancholy, and fell also into an old habit: he began to plot with the Lithuanians, then in occupation of Smolensk. His servants did not fail to report this in the proper quarter.

He was not put to the torture for long. On January 17, 1614, the servants had denounced him; on the 25th he was already in

chains and on the way to Siberia. On March 23 he reached Tobolsk, and was placed in a "secure prison."

There were few educated persons in Siberia. The pan's Latin quotations greatly impressed the authorities of Tobolsk. In three years' time he was free again. At first he did no more than perform small commissions for the voyevod. Then he was placed on his staff. In view of his aristocratic origin he was raised to the rank of Boyarevich or "boyar's son"—"Honourable," as we should say. This rank denoted in Siberia the higher grade of the Russian authorities, the nobility of Siberia, in distinction from the common people.

Eight years after his arrival at the Tobolsk prison Boyarevich Khmielevsky was appointed commandant of the ostrog of Yeniseisk, which had been established three years earlier. Three years after this he was appointed "Revizor" or comptroller of the richest and most important voyevodship in Siberia, that of Mangaseya, whence Moscow drew its principal revenues.

The revizor travelled with staff and escort; he took with him a select little Tatar harem, four barrels of "green wine," and two boilers and four pipes for distilling spirits on the spot.

On his arrival at Mangaseya he discovered grave irregularities in the administration and duly reported them in scathing terms. He also found that there was no local tavern, and at once rectified the omission, with the immediate result of valuable incomings of furs in exchange for vodka.

But where did Khmielevsky get the raw material for his vodka? Corn did not grow in Mangaseya, and at that time nobody in Siberia had ever heard of potatoes. The stern comptroller drew his material from the State grain stocks, which had been transported with enormous labour to Mangaseya for the subsistence of the Russian colony there. He sent his staff out with stocks of vodka and required them to bring back a fixed quantity of furs. For a glass of vodka expended they had to show three sables. What ratio the staff themselves fixed in bartering we do not know.

At the end of his inspection the comptroller returned to Tobolsk. Once more he was accompanied by his whole train—escort and staff and harem, the last enriched by a few representatives of the fair sex of the Ostyak race. In addition he took with him 600 sables, 25 unscored skins, 724 half-sables, 900 smaller furs, 100 white foxes, 6 blue foxes, 15 beavers, 162 hare-skins, and a quantity of squirrel, fox, and bear skins.

Khmielevsky proceeded up the Ob. At Obdorsk a Customs house had been set up on the river; permitted goods were subject to payment of duty, but those goods which were State monopolies were confiscated. The first of all in the confiscation list were, of course, furs.

Without this control of articles leaving Mangaseya the Government would have been unable to get any revenue at all from Mangaseyan furs. Officials, officers, and ordinary Cossacks regarded their furs as compensation for the severe conditions of service in that cold, remote country. At that time the road from Siberia back to Russia still followed in Yermak's footsteps. A similar Customs station had been set up in the town of Verkhoturye, on the Tura, and here most of the furs brought home "privately" by the Siberian officials, from the voyevods downward, were confiscated. Usually these were the best of the furs that had been extorted from the natives in the Tsar's name. At the outset of the seventeenth century, in order to have the whole of the traffic in furs from Mangaseya under control, the Government had prohibited the use of the sea route from Mangaseya, down the Dvina and the Pechora, on pain of death.

In vain did the "head" of the Customs station demand the bills of lading for inspection: Khmielevsky rattled his sabre, referred to his alleged "friend" the archbishop of Tobolsk, and threatened to behead the "head." The Customs officer knew that this boyarevich was a person of eminence in Tobolsk. It was not healthy to get across that sort of person. He let Khmielevsky alone, but reported to Tobolsk.

At Tobolsk the matter was taken very seriously. The voyevod at once held an inquiry, at which the "friend," Archbishop Makari, was present. The archbishop was an able, upright, and very influential man. At the inquiry some piquant details came to light. It was ascertained that one of the four barrels of wine had been presented to Khmielevsky by the vice-voyevod, and a second "tiny" one had come from one of the highest officials in Tobolsk. Khmielevsky admitted everything, shifting the blame on to other shoulders.

It did not help him. He was mercilessly flogged with the knout. The furs were confiscated, the staff dismissed, the harem distributed among those in need.

The pan's chequered career was at an end. He was ruined, wrecked, a man with nothing left in life but to languish in the wilds of Siberia. So it seemed—but that was not what happened. Soon Khmielevsky was going about Tobolsk telling his friends that he had been appointed leader of a corn transport to Mangaseya.

On this second journey Khmielevsky came to Mangaseya as an honoured guest. This time there were two voyevods in charge there, Kokorev and Palizyn. They were no fools, though they were of very different types. In another place they might have been able to work together on the best of terms. But there was not room for both of them in Mangaseya. Friction came, and then open hostility. Mangaseya was split into two camps.



When Khmielevsky met Palizyn the pan and the voyevod discovered that they were fully in agreement on certain matters, and also that they could discuss them together in Polish. Palizyn was himself of Polish origin. An entirely natural friendship grew up between him and Khmielevsky.

As the two voyevods were not, so far, actually fighting each other, Khmielevsky went on to the little town of Turukhansk, in order to do honour to "Saint Nicholas, the miracle worker." The voyevods at once divined the "saint" he actually meant to honour: they themselves honoured him no less. This time, however, Khmielevsky was more modest than the time before: he contented himself with a single barrel of vodka and ten poods of honey and "just a little" tobacco. The voyevods added to these offerings to the miracle-working saint a little barrel apiece on their own account.

Immediately after Khmielevsky's departure the fighting began. Kokorev barricaded himself in the voyevod's palace and successfully prevented Palizyn from breaking in. Then he went over to the attack, and drove his rival's troops beyond the borders of the city. Palizyn entrenched himself in the neighbouring Ostyak camps. His messengers rode out to the mighty hero Khmielevsky.

When their message reached the pan he summoned the inhabitants to the church and made a speech. Briefly he recounted his services to Christendom, to Europe, and to the Russian empire; he proposed that for the benefit of the Christian faith all skins and furs in the possession of the inhabitants should be delivered up to him, the boyar Khmielevsky.

Friend Palizyn meanwhile sat in the snow, freezing, hungry, and fruitlessly beleaguering the villain Kokorev. In vain did he send letters to Khmielevsky asking for aid. Khmielevsky talked of mobilizing the whole male population, but what really interested him was the mobilizing of the females. This alienated his subjects. An attempt was made on his life. He replied to it with terrorism. His house was then set on fire.

Palizyn lost hope of victory, and went to Turukhansk and thence to Tobolsk. Khmielevsky considered it advisable to follow him thither.

Palizyn did not stop long in Tobolsk, but went on again to Moscow. Before his departure he was able to put in a word for his friend. In Moscow he submitted to the Tsar a skilfully concocted memorandum in which he set out the plan of conquest of "the great Siberian river Lèna." He appended to the memorandum a map of the intended route, and proposed that the Russian empire should be expanded "to the sunrise, to the pass by which Alexander the Great crossed, and to the highest peak Karkaur, where the one-armed and one-legged people live."

The dictator of Turukhansk was put in prison, but only for a few days. This time there was no question of the knout, and his salary continued to be paid, even for the period in prison.

But he was no longer the same man. His flower of the field had been wafted away, and now he, Pan Pavel, was attacked by a cold and wintry blast. It was suddenly brought home to the hero that the pain in his back and his disordered liver were getting seriously worse. And he had no teeth left under his long grey moustache.

In 1638 he was sent on duty to Tomsk. Yet farther, yet deeper into cold, grim Siberia. He set out for his new station, died on the way, and was buried at the expense of the State.

A RICH AND FAIR COUNTRY

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THE systematic conquest of Siberia by the armies of Moscow did not continue for long. In 1637 a special Ministry for Siberia was set up, the "Sibirsky Prikas," but from that very moment all initiative passed to the voyevods in Siberia. And the voyevods did not even keep a record of the lands the "free men" discovered and appropriated.

Cossacks went in their boats along the northern rivers, sent bands out in every direction, brought the natives under subjection, built ostrogs. After them came the fur traders. Hunters scattered in the forests far across the subjugated territory, and built themselves huts and small blockhouses. They formed "artels"—co-operatives—for hunting and fishing; they prospected for ores and mammoth tusks; there were even artels for the excavation of tumuli.

Southern expansion was hampered for a century by fighting with Kirghizes and Khakasses, vestiges of once mighty realms that had belonged to the empire of Genghis Khan. But the Russian girdles of fortresses gradually enclosed their territories more and more tightly, like the hoops on a cask. Within these girdles Russian peasants and exiled settlers established themselves.

Siberia lured enterprising, reckless, energetic men. How? One need only talk to a genuine Siberian: there is no region in Russia in which local patriotism is stronger. "Siberia has a golden soil," it was said in Russia as early as the seventeenth century. "Siberia is a rich and fair country!" exclaimed Yadrintsev, than whom no Russian knew the country better.

Be it noted that these things were said at a time when Siberian gold and Siberian mineral resources were virtually unheard of. Even without gold the country was a mine of wealth!

The rivers were the path of conquest. Siberia's rivers are fantastic, extraordinary. Their course resembles the currents of the ocean; they encroach on their banks in spring and become seas; in winter they freeze into glaciers. Siberia possesses four river systems which are navigable for many thousands of miles. Each one of them has a basin greater than western Europe! Their tributaries so nearly meet on the watersheds that it would be possible without great labour to construct a single waterway leading from the Urals almost to the Pacific. As early as the days of Catherine II the German explorer Pallas, who was a member

of the Russian Academy of Sciences, made the proposal that Siberia should be united with Russia by a waterway.

But the Cossacks in their river expeditions were not thinking of these matters. The first thing that struck them was the incredible wealth of fishes. The fishes swam in shoals so tightly packed together that at times they were pushed out of the water. When a boat forced its way through these masses the fishes were squeezed out and jumped into the boat! Salmon-trout, *moksune*, sterlet, giant sturgeon, *khairysi*, *taimi*, *omule* . . .

What could the rivers have looked like to those first Cossacks? For three centuries since their day anyone who chose had caught fish in these rivers, as much as ever he wanted, and yet, in 1887, at the village of Kuninskaya a thousand pood of fish (about seventeen tons) was taken from one deep spot in the Ob. Alongside, under the ice, a layer of dead fish was found. The fish lay squeezed together under the ice, a thick mass reaching down to the bottom and stretching over an area of three to four hundred square yards!

At another village on the Ob, Byelogorye, a vast shoal of pike and next to them a shoal of *nerfling* (a fish of the carp type) had been stopped by a jutting crag. The inhabitants of the village knew nothing of this. Frost set in, the flow of water ceased, the river shrank, and the fish, covered with a layer of ice, lay on the dry ground. In the spring the layer thawed, before the ice began to drift down the river. The exposed fish covered the river-bank for a length of three miles, to a width of eight to a dozen yards and a depth of over a yard! What quantity can they have amounted to? Three thousand tons? Four thousand?

These fish perished simply because nobody caught them. In this particular case the fat kine died because the lean kine had not eaten them up.

The Cossacks also saw the forests. At first they had come into the region of the northern forests, which stretches right across Siberia below the girdle of the tundra. "Taiga," said the Tatars, pointing to the snow-covered mountains. Thereafter the Cossacks also called the forest-covered mountains "taiga." Later the term was applied to the vast primeval forests of Siberia. There grew such cedars, larches, firs, and pines, that even men coming from the northern forests of Russia thought them miraculous. The Siberians' favourite tree, the cedar, is not strictly entitled to its name. It has little in common with the cedar of Lebanon. It would more correctly be called "cembra" (*Pinus cembra*). Its splendid fruit, the "cedar" nut, supplies food for sables and squirrels, and even for human beings, both as nut and in the form of the excellent cedar oil. Among the Russian settlers the collection of the nuts became the festival of the death and resurrection of nature. The mystery of the Siberian Dionysus!

Farther south the taiga passes into mixed forest. This is called in Siberia the "black" forest. Here, in addition to fir and pine, there are magnificent birches, slender poplars, eternally trembling aspens, scented limes; beneath them grow endless bushes and plants—all entangled by the creeping tendrils of the wild hop.

And the mushrooms! It was worth while to conquer Siberia for the mushrooms alone! There is an unending succession of fasts in Russia. Whole fortunes have been built up on mushrooms, the favourite food for fast-days.

Today within the borders of Siberia there are 770,000,000 hectares of forest land, roughly three million square miles, about six times as much as in all Europe without Russia. But the Cossacks did not measure the forests. They did not count the square miles. They recognized that they had no figures that went so far.

They saw very clearly, however, all the things that lived and moved in these forests. The whole of western and northern Siberia was then full of sables. The sables would come up to the human habitations. Women going to fetch water would kill them with a blow of their wooden yokes. When the first hunters' artels were formed, each member acquired two to three hundred skins in a "season."

Today the character of the sable has changed. It no longer comes into the neighbourhood of human beings, and as a rule it only goes out in search of food at night.

The Siberian red deer wandered along the banks of the Tara and populated the Altai range; deer were everywhere to be found. They were not even hunted. The deer were simply rounded up and driven into corrals. In 1754, twenty-five versts from Nerchinsk, 4,027 deer were rounded up in this way on a single day. Wild boars lived in the Baraba steppe on the best of terms with the delicate ermine. Squirrels, bears, and hares passed one another everywhere. There were beavers, gluttons, and foxes of all shades—blue foxes, red foxes, black foxes, white foxes; and the Siberian foxes, unlike the German Reynard, were particular favourites because they were without guile.

In the pursuit of Kuchum the conquerors first made the acquaintance of the Siberian steppe, the widest stretch of pasture-land in the world; it extends from the Caspian to the Amur, nearly five thousand miles. Camels and trains of horses grazed there, and countless herds of sheep, cows, and yaks. On the route to the Altai range the Siberian steppe is as hot in summer as the pampas of America. As the traveller approaches the Altai and reaches the fertile valley of Bukhtarma he is surrounded by a cool atmosphere and such beauty as is nowhere paralleled in the world. So stated the American G. Kennan, who was there toward the end

of the nineteenth century and had travelled in the Cordillera, the Andes, and Switzerland. The German scientist Middendorf, who saw this steppe in the last century, gave an enthusiastic description of it.

But the climate? Yes, it is grim. Siberia is a continental country. The city of Omsk lies a little to the north of the latitude of Birmingham, and Irkutsk a little to the south. But both have winter temperatures of fifty and sixty degrees below zero centigrade, with snow on the ground for six months in the year. How many companies of daring pioneers have perished in the snow in the fearful Siberian winter storms! Yet the climate is healthy. The Russian settlers became acclimatized remarkably quickly, and so did the Yakuts, a Turco-Tatar race that came from the south. Not only human beings but their animals soon thrive—Caucasian sheep, horses from the Don, cows from Holland. Where the Siberian population had anything like enough to eat, it enjoyed abounding health. There were, it is true, many diseases in Siberia, but very little indeed is heard there of tuberculosis.

Severest and most inhospitable of all is Polar Siberia. But even there life is possible. Polar Siberia has its own flora and an abundant fauna, and even here men find life tolerable and become fond of the country. Look on the map for the town of Turukhansk, the scene of the heroic deeds of Pan Khmielevsky. Many years later the rumour spread that the Government intended to evacuate this town and settle its inhabitants farther south. The population sent in a petition; they declined to be transferred to the fertile Ninussinsk steppe, and begged to be permitted instead to go farther north, to the estuary of the Yenisei.

The Siberian winters are terrible. For several weeks the quicksilver in the thermometers freezes—a sign that the temperature has fallen below minus 38·4 degrees centigrade. On the other hand, in Siberia, with the exception of the east coast, there is no wind in winter. And dry cold without a wind is a splendid thing. At 40 degrees below zero all things living retire into their lairs and nests. The sun shines brightly, the frosty air is crisp, and the whole world seems to have died out. Only now and then does a fat raven fly past. Yet man is active as ever, building up and pulling down.

The Cossacks saw that men can live in this country. There was plenty of freedom there, an abundant nature and a scarcity of authorities. They determined to settle there.

DESHNEV, A SIMPLE COSSACK

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IN 1632—that is to say, exactly half a century after Yermak's capture of Isker—the ostrog Yakutsk was established on the Lena. Ten years later it had become just such an administrative centre for eastern as Tobolsk was for western Siberia. From here conquest proceeded in three directions—north-east to the Bering Straits, the Bering Sea, and Kamchatka; eastward to the Sea of Okhotsk, and southward to the Amur.

Cossack troops moved up the Lena and its tributary the Aldan, and penetrated from river to river by land and water as far as the Kolyma. Others sailed down the Lena to its estuary and thence along the shores of the Arctic. They went in their "kochi"—shallow wooden boats with primitive sails. The Cossacks had no hawsers that deserved the name, no tar, and no nails. Of navigating instruments they had not the faintest notion. They were fresh-water Vikings—and now they were out to tame the ocean!

They went boldly across the wild seas, always on the one search, for furs. The north had also, however, its own treasures—whale-bone, walrus ivory, and mammoth tusks. In the tundra the Cossacks sought and found frozen mammoths. In the course of two centuries 22,000 of these were found in Polar Siberia.

The Cossack Timofei Buldakov sailed in autumn with five kochi down the Lena and then eastwards. Off the mouth of the river Khroma "it grew dark, and next morning the sea was frozen." For three days Timofei lay there, and already the ice was as thick as a hand's breadth. On the fourth day the whole company, together with the ice-floe, were driven seaward. On the sixth day the wind dropped and the surrounding water froze.

The Cossacks set out across the ice to regain land, and met a comrade, Andrei Goreloi, in his sleigh: he had been caught in the ice like them. Some days passed, and then the water streamed toward them from the sea, broke up the ice, and carried them all out to sea for five days and nights. "Until now God's anger had not been so great," said Timofei in his narrative, "but now we all faced certain death."

A wind arose, the floes crashed against each other, the kochi were all crushed, and the stores on board dropped down the icy clefts. The Cossacks had not taken their sleighs out of the kochi, and they were no longer capable of dragging anything along, as they were all suffering from scurvy. They struggled for nine days

over the ice, and at last reached land. Of what iron were these men made? After this experience they made themselves snowshoes and, "cold, hungry, naked, and bare-footed," covered a further two or three score miles and reached winter quarters by the Yana river.

In 1636 the hetman Yelissei Buza sailed down the Lena with a troop of Cossacks and forty hunters, and then went westward along the coast to the river Olenek—where the finest black foxes in the world are found. Then he went eastward, and in the following year reached the Yana. About the same time Posnik Ivanov and his troop arrived from the upper Yana. The two leaders pushed on to the river Indigirka. Posnik had thirty-five men, and considered them a sufficient body with which to impose tribute payments on the Yukagirs. But the Yukagirs were not of his opinion. There was long and obstinate fighting, the upshot of which was that Posnik wintered there and collected a huge quantity of furs and mammoth tusks, but in the process of these struggles he lost half his men. They were drowned at sea, or died of hunger or scurvy, or from the poisoned arrows of the Yukagirs, or even from one another's sword-thrusts. This last occurred through quarrels over the best furs and the "best" natives. In the icy fogs of the north these adventurers saw the fiery *fata Morgana* of quick enrichment and a pleasant life without working and without care. Which of them found fulfilment of the vision? Probably not one.

Such dreams fired men on this icy soil. In summer the soil thaws down to a maximum of six feet; below that it remains eternally frozen and hard as ice. To build a house in these regions calls for laborious preparation. Failing that, the soil melts under the house and rises and flows away, and the walls fall in.

In these regions the roots of the trees do not strike downward, but spread laterally. Consequently the forests are sparse. Everything spreads wide, spreads afar. There are no frontiers. The ice-bound tundra passes into the ice-bound ocean. The sky brings its clouds down to the earth.

The part of Siberia which the Cossacks were exploring at this time is the coldest territory on the globe. At Verkhoyansk on the Yana is the world's pole of coldness, with a winter temperature of minus 70 degrees centigrade.

The Cossacks were a hardy race.

In 1644 one of them, Mikhail Stadukhin, set up winter quarters by the Kolyma. From them grew up the town of Nizhne-Kolymsk. Later there was a fur market there, and the Chukchis and the Yakuts brought sables, beavers, and walrus ivory for bartering for knives, vodka, and tobacco. Stadukhin remained there two years. He collected information about the Chukchis' land route to the



river Pogikha. He was told that it was only three days' journey, and that walrus tusks were deposited there in heaps.

This river Pogikha comes into all the east Siberian stories of the time. All men were in search of it, and none found it. In our day it has been established that it was identical with the little river Pokach, which runs into the Bering Sea.

Stadukhin's companion, Semyon Deshnev, listened attentively to the stories of the Pogikha. He had already been long wandering in those regions, always on the watch for an opportunity at last of a "good catch." He discussed this Pogikha river with Stadukhin. Nobody had yet succeeded in reaching it by land. "Suppose we try by water, across the sea?" said Deshnev.

Next year Stadukhin made the attempt. He sailed along the Yana, thence by the pole of coldness to the Kolyma, and there in 1649 he built two kochi and sailed east in them. After seven days' and seven nights' sail, with one koche lost and no river-mouth found, he turned back. He had at all events a full cargo of walrus ivory.

About the same time another expedition was in progress in search of the Pogikha. It was led by Fedot Alexeyev, a daring merchant adventurer who had reached this remote land from the White Sea. He had been warned that the country was inhabited by "one-armed and one-legged men," but he considered that it would be all the easier to deal with them. He built four kochi by the Kolyma, and sailed away in search of the Pogikha. A thick wall of ice compelled him to turn back.

He was in no way cast down by this failure, and determined to make a fresh attempt in the following year. This time two more kochi joined him. In one of them, with his five-and-twenty men, sat Semyon Ivanovich Deshnev.

At last Deshnev saw beckoning the longed-for opportunity of a "good catch." He knew all that was needful about the Pogikha, and was so full of confidence in the success of the expedition that he guaranteed Alexeyev in advance 280 sables from the anticipated spoil.

The expedition sailed out to sea from the Kolyma, and took an eastward course. As it rounded the extreme promontory of the continent of Asia, now called Cape Deshnev, or alternatively East Cape, one of the kochi was wrecked and the rest were driven out to sea. Deshnev was blown far to the south, passing the mouth of the Anadyr, and was then driven ashore.

This happened in 1648. And it means that the Cossack Deshnev sailed in that year from the Arctic to the Pacific Ocean, discovering Bering Straits eighty years before Bering!

Later he sent a report of his adventure to the voyevod of Yakutsk, for transmission to Moscow. Deshnev had two reasons

for making this report. In the first place, he considered himself to be in the Tsar's service, and while he was out to make just as much as he could for himself he wanted, nevertheless, to receive a regular salary. Secondly, he was absolutely determined to establish the priority of his discoveries; for he was not making them for the glory of science but for the acquisition of walrus ivory on his own account.

His report is lucid and simple. It tells how he was thrown ashore and then turned northward with his men, only reaching the Anadyr after ten weeks of laborious journeying. He reached the river not far from its estuary. There the company were in dire straits—no forest and no Chukchis anywhere discernible. On this cheerless spot Deshnev wintered, and he did not proceed up the Anadyr until the following year. In its upper reaches he found men who called themselves "Anaules"—men of very martial appearance. This did not deter the exhausted, starving Deshnev from there and then exacting a tribute of furs from them. Here he laid the foundation stone of the ostrog of Anadyr. That was at the time the extreme eastward limit of Russian penetration in Siberia.

In his ostrog Deshnev had the pleasure in April 1650 of greeting a new expedition which had reached the spot by land from the Kolyma. The arrival of the Cossack Motora, leader of the expedition, revived Deshnev's courage. Together the two leaders made boats and in 1652 sailed down the Anadyr in them as far as its estuary. They were the first Russians to reach the Bering Sea by this river. In the estuary they ran upon a sandbank that richly rewarded them for all their privations, for there were mountains of walrus ivory on it.

Motora had no chance to profit by this discovery. In the same year he was murdered by Chukchis.

Deshnev had to return to the Anadyr ostrog. He began to cut down timber for boat-building: he was determined to go by sea to the mouth of the Kolyma. A further year was taken by the preparations for this return journey, and then another troop visited him, under the Cossack Yuri Seliverstov. The land route to the Kolyma was thus verified.

Not far from the estuary of the Anadyr Deshnev met, in a Koryak camp, a Yakut woman whom Alexeyev had taken with him on his long journey. Deshnev asked what had happened to her master. "The master and his companions lost their teeth and went in to the chief hetman; others were killed by the Koryaks, and yet others swam away in small boats."

Deshnev understood: Alexeyev had died of scurvy. "Do you want to return to your people?" he asked.

The Yakut woman shook her head. "I have another master

now. He gives me as much fish liver as I want, and has given me this." She opened her rough shirt collar and showed a little chain round her neck, with a silver medal for services rendered.

From which of the Cossacks had that been taken? Deshnev asked no further question.

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Deshnev's report has several times been subjected to close criticism, most recently by F. A. Golder, the American historian of Siberia. Golder maintains that Deshnev did not reach the Anadyr by the sea route but by the land route from the upper course of the Kolyma, as Motora and Seliverstov had done, and as many others did after him. But this criticism from a learned professor should not outweigh the report of our simple Cossack. Every word in Deshnev's report has been closely examined, and not merely at a desk but on the spot, at Cape Deshnev, on the Diomed Islands, and in the Anadyr estuary. His geographical, meteorological, ethnographic, and other particulars have proved to be entirely accurate. In an excellent work the Russian writer L. S. Berg considers all these investigations and comes to this conclusion: "What Deshnev says he did, he did."

But why, after Deshnev's sea voyage had been reported to it, was the Russian Government still unaware whether Siberia is actually connected with America? Why did Peter the Great later ask Bering whether it is? The answer is characteristic of the history of geographical discovery, and not only in Siberia. Deshnev handed his report to the voyevod of Yakutsk in 1655; it became known in St Petersburg only eighty-seven years later, when it was published by the famous German-Russian historian Gerhard Friedrich Müller. Müller himself discovered the report in the Yakutsk archives in 1736—eight years after Bering sailed from Kamchatka on his expedition.

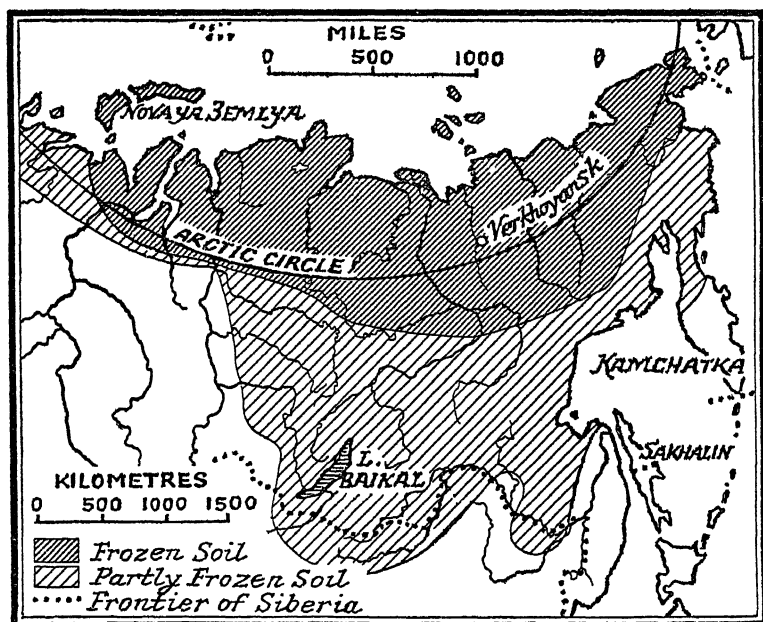
Deshnev's discovery was, nevertheless, known in Siberia. All the Russian maps made between his voyage and Bering's show north-eastern Siberia bordered by the sea. All these maps exclude the possibility of any land connexion between Siberia and America.

Why, then, was Peter in doubt? The great Tsar held European science in honour. And in 1706 the famous French geographer Guillaume Delisle issued in Paris a map of "Tartary," on which there is to be seen, at the extreme north-east corner of Siberia, a long tongue of land with a chain of mountains. Next to it are these words: "On ne sait pas où se termine cette chaîne de montagnes, et si elle ne va pas joindre quelque autre continent" ("it is not known where this mountain chain ends, and whether it does not join some other continent"). Delisle was still in doubt, but shortly after his map another one was published in Amsterdam,

and at the same place on this map there was a statement that this mountain chain runs on to America.

For all this Deshnev is not to blame. He made one of the greatest of geographical discoveries, though he did not realize its scientific importance. What it meant for practical purposes he realized very clearly.

We make no demand that the Bering Straits should be renamed in Deshnev's honour. We do not contend that Deshnev's achievements place him above Bering and Cook. All we say is that, eighty years before Bering and a hundred and thirty years before Cook, Deshnev sailed between Asia and America.



MAP OF THE FROZEN SOIL OF SIBERIA

## THE STRUGGLE FOR THE BLACK DRAGON

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VARIOUS assessments are possible of Deshnev's achievements at sea; the fact remains that through him Russia, sixty-seven years after Yermak and his men marched away from the Stroganovs, penetrated to the extreme eastern limit of Siberia.

In the course of a man's lifetime a whole continent had been seized and welded to Russia.

About the middle of the seventeenth century a veritable "rush" to eastern Siberia set in. Rumours of the country's fantastic wealth turned the heads of great and small. Every voyevod equipped an expedition of his own. They set out from Yakutsk, from Yeniseisk, even from Tobolsk and Tomsk. Rich merchants of Kazan and Kholmogory sent out their men. The disastrous expedition of Fedot Alexeyev, with whom Deshnev had set out, had been financed by Moscow merchants.

The voyevods competed with each other. The Cossack detachment under the hetman Dmitri Kopylov, who in 1639 was the first to set up winter quarters by the Sea of Okhotsk, had been sent out from Tomsk in spite of the veto of the voyevod of Yeniseisk. Nine years later the voyevod of Yakutsk sent out his own expedition. This expedition discovered a better route and in 1649 established an ostrog at the mouth of the Okhota—later the city of Okhotsk. As a historian so beautifully expresses it, "the wave of Russian colonization had thus obtained a firm footing on the shore of the Sea of Okhotsk!"

At the same time the Cossacks pushed southward. They sailed up the Yenisei and its tributaries to the "Holy Sea" of the Buryats and Tunguses, Lake Baikal. In 1646 the hetman Kolesnikov rounded the lake from the north-west and built an ostrog on the upper Angara. In the following year the boyarevich Pokhabov reached Lake Baikal from Yeniseisk and went the whole length of the lake from north to south on the ice. Next year the Cossack Galkin went round the lake from the north, reached the river Barguzin, and there built an ostrog.

Galkin was a man of exceptional daring and energy. Beyond Lake Baikal he came to a region swarming with sables and ermines—those of the Barguzin region are famous to this day—and also with nomad Tunguses. Galkin mastered them all. But the lake left him speechless.

A sea! Over four hundred miles long, and fifty across—longer

than the Adriatic and almost as wide. Galkin tried to sound the lake, but failed. Its depth is now known—six to seven hundred fathoms! The autumn storms on this lake are as dangerous as on the ocean. And it harbours the same fauna as the Arctic—seals and salmon. A little brother of the northern ocean, placed a thousand feet above sea-level!

Beyond the lake Galkin saw valleys with vestiges of irrigation. Who had sown grain there—and when?

Galkin returned to Yeniseisk and reported all his observations. The mention of grain fell on deaf ears; only sables mattered. In Yakutsk, however, the question of grain was viewed differently. There the voyevods collected furs from the natives, subjugating them and exploiting them; the voyevods had ample supplies of walrus and mammoth ivory and fish—but no corn. Corn had to be brought from western Siberia, which then produced more than it needed. The corn had to be transported a couple of thousand miles along the Siberian rivers, and this was possible only in summer. From river to river it had to be carried overland. Yakutsk was always hungry.

Moreover, the Tunguses and Yakuts declared with one accord that somewhere in the south, whither it was easy to go by the rivers, in the land of Dauria, there were waving fields of golden ears in summer. There, said the Tunguses, flowed the “black river.” By this river the crops grew. People lived there who had “plenty, plenty silver.”

The first Cossacks who sailed up the Aldan, crossed the mountains, and descended into the valleys of the tributaries of the Amur, confirmed these statements. The writer Bakhtiarov, who for a time exchanged the quill for the sword, returned from his voyage of adventure with a Tungus whom he had taken captive. The Tungus declared in Yakutsk that by the rivers Zeya and Shilka, which flowed into the river of the black dragon, there grew as much corn and silver as man could desire. The voyevod ordered Bakhtiarov to sail up the Aldan at once with a company of seventy men, to test the Tungus’s story.

The writer, however, was skilled in testing statements only at home at his desk. Testing them on rushing streams, over terrible mountains, and in mysterious lands, was work for other men.

A year before this, Yakutsk had seen no corn for ten months. In the year that was to come, in all probability there would be a new famine. Appeals for corn to Tobolsk brought only evasive answers. The voyevod Pyotr Golovin resolved to send out a new expedition to the land of Dauria. He collected a body of a hundred and twelve Cossacks and fifteen hunters; two writers were attached to it, and two interpreters, and a guide and a smith.

The command of the expedition was entrusted to Vassily

Poyarkov. Little is known of this man. He was no simple Cossack, but a "chieftain" (*ataman*, hetman); he was experienced in commerce and in the collection of tribute, could manage a quill no less readily than Bakhtiarov, and was incomparably better with the sword. His outstanding quality was a steely, unbending resolution, not "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

In July 1643 Poyarkov set out from Yakutsk. In November he was compelled to go ashore from the upper Aldan, as the river had begun to freeze. He set up winter quarters and left there his heavy baggage and a guard; with the rest of his men he crossed the mountains, and in December he reached the Zeya. Here he settled for the winter, and began inquiries among the natives as to the land of Dauria. They told him that oats, barley, millet, buckwheat, and peas grew by the Shilka. So he had heard already, but he had seen no sign of it.

He would have been only too glad of a glimpse of all the grain; for his men had nothing left to eat. In the winter their hunger grew so severe that the Cossacks began hunting the Daurians, and feeding on this "game." During the winter Poyarkov lost half his men from starvation and scurvy. Discipline relaxed. Only his relentless severity enabled him to maintain his authority and to nip in the bud all attempts at rebellion. He knew that he risked a stab in the back at any moment; consequently he had no mercy for other men's backs.

In the spring the Cossacks whom Poyarkov had left behind in winter quarters by the Aldan rejoined him. The whole company sailed down the Amur in boats of their own making. If they tied up alongside anywhere they were received at once with a hail of arrows—the news of their movements went ahead of them. Of twenty-seven men whom Poyarkov sent out on one occasion in search of food, only two returned.

Poyarkov spent the following winter on the Amur estuary. He had fewer difficulties this time, for he had captured some Gilyaks, whom he held as hostages, and in this way he compelled their fellow-tribesmen to give him food. When the ice melted in spring, he sailed out into the Straits of Tartary and northwards along the shore of the Sea of Okhotsk. He spent the third winter by the estuary of the Ulya, sailed up that river in the spring, crossed the most inaccessible mountains of eastern Siberia, and on June 12, 1646, after an absence of two years and eleven months, arrived back in Yakutsk. He had lost almost all his men, had endured unheard-of fatigue and privation, had made a journey which for nearly two centuries to come scarcely anyone else accomplished, and succeeded on top of all this in arriving in robust health with a valuable collection of furs!

Yet, like many others, he was not to reap the fruit of his labours.

The Cossacks who had come back with him laid a complaint against him. They charged him with cruel treatment of the natives and yet crueller treatment of themselves. They declared that he had caused the death of their comrades, had killed Cossacks with his own hand, and had compelled others to eat human flesh.

Poyarkov did not dispute these charges, but pointed to the circumstances of this expedition. The voyevod of Yakutsk sent him to Moscow for judgment. What happened to him there no man knows.

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While Poyarkov was sailing on the Amur, the search for routes to the Shilka and the Amur was continued. Two new expeditions reached the Shilka, and though they returned with neither fame nor spoil, they brought confirmation of the stories of the wealth and abundance in the land of Dauria, of its grain, and of its numerous population.

About this time Yerofei Khabarov came to Yakutsk. He offered to undertake an expedition to Dauria at his own risk and expense, and asked only to be furnished with weapons and the Government's authorization; let the voyevod give the expedition his approval and appoint him, Khabarov, its leader.

This man Khabarov had seen many things in his life. He came from northern Russia, from the old city of Ustyug. He had gone on trading business to Mangaseya and had penetrated as far as the Taimyr peninsula. Clearly his travels had not been barren of result, for he brought a small fortune with him to eastern Siberia, and at the confluence of the Kuta and the Lena he founded a salt-works. It is clear that he was not a mere trading adventurer but a solid merchant: salt was a sound investment in eastern Siberia.

Soon tilled fields surrounded the salt-works, and then a mill was erected. Khabarov became a corn wholesaler—another solid and vitally important business. In 1641, after eleven years of this constructive work, all these enterprises were taken away from Khabarov by the voyevod of Yakutsk; they were appropriated for the State. What led to this step is not clear. It may be that Khabarov's arbitrary way with the local population was the reason, for he was a hot-tempered man and had a heavy hand; his heart was very susceptible, however, to female beauty.

After this loss of his enterprises, Khabarov settled in the town of Kirensk. Here he began tilling the land once more. A group of peasants were sent from Yakutsk to settle in "his" region, and Khabarov fought a regular battle with them. It went ill with many of the would-be settlers.

Khabarov hastened to Yakutsk, and collected a troop of a hundred and fifty men, without waiting for the permission of



voyevod Franzbekov to do so. When, having done this, he appeared before the voyevod, the latter could only give his approval to the expedition Khabarov proposed to undertake.

In March 1649 Khabarov sailed up the Lena, and then up the Olekma. He tried to explore farther, but it was difficult, for after their experience of Poyarkov not men only but animals and birds took flight in all directions at the sight of a Cossack. He reached the river of the black dragon—the Amur. In an abandoned village he found an old woman who had continued cooking vegetables over a brushwood fire as the Cossacks drew near. Khabarov tried to get information from her. The old woman ignored him and went on stirring her devil's brew. Finally, after repeated appeals, she murmured: "Come at night; then thou wilt learn everything."

The old woman was called Mazalchan, and she was cunning. She knew that without a little "play-acting" she would be unlikely to escape a little torture: that was Khabarov's method in Dauria, as it was Pizarro's in Peru, of extorting their secrets from the natives. At night, while she was busy with her hocus-pocus, in the midst of dense steam, the old woman told Khabarov of the treasures of the land of Dauria. She told him that in the mountains close by there were deposits of gold, silver, and precious stones. Farther on into Dauria he would find corn; but what was corn in comparison with gold?

"The great black dragon," said the old woman, "does not yield itself up without a price. Many men will lose their lives for it; whole peoples will fight for it; but no man will become its master for all time." She showed him the route to take for the cornfields of Dauria—but she advised him not to take it.

Khabarov ignored her advice; he took that route in spite of her. All she had said proved to be lies; the next old women met with paid dearly for them. Yet—had she really spoken untruth? Were not these mountains around her the same mountains which hundreds of years later gave up a ceaseless flow of treasure, a flow not exhausted to this day?

In May 1650 Khabarov returned to Yakutsk from his first expedition. He brought little spoil with him. But he had confirmed the news of the corn of Dauria. He brought samples of it, and a map of Dauria. His report was brief and to the point: grain could be brought from Dauria to Yakutsk in a fortnight.

Immediately after his return he began to prepare a second expedition. He equipped it with care, procuring three cannon and horses. His force included a hundred and seventeen mercenaries who had volunteered and seventeen Cossacks provided by the Government. In the same year, 1650, he appeared again on the Amur, reached the Daurian capital, Albazin, and gave battle

to its garrison. Fortune smiled on him, and Albazin was captured. He sent part of his force against the fleeing enemy. The enemy were not used to such vigorous methods. They were also burdened with a multitude of women and children. The men lost their lives; the women and children were taken captive.

Khabarov at once fortified the city, left a small garrison in it, and sailed farther down the Amur. He defeated the Daurians wherever he found them, and returned to Albazin with prisoners and rich booty. He sent a report to Yakutsk, in which he stated that the food grown on the banks of the Amur would feed twenty thousand people.

He wintered in safety in Albazin, and felt himself to be the king of a conquered country. The slightest attempt at a rising he suppressed without mercy. By spring he had accumulated such a collection and so much information that he might well have been content and returned home. But he was determined to conquer the Amur! Soon he was taking his Cossacks again down this Black River. His "log book" was sober and factual like that of any good captain:

"On June 2, after we had constructed large and small vessels and had prayed to God for his mercy, we sailed away from Albazin and came in two days to yurts (tents) which had been abandoned by all the Daurians, and we caught only one Daurian woman, in order to interrogate her. . . . After furious fighting we captured three fortresses of Princes Olgemsa and Latodi, and killed six hundred and forty-one Daurians, little and big; of women and maids two hundred and forty-three were taken prisoner, and one hundred and eighteen children. As we went on we passed one-and-twenty villages; we took hostages from them; some were killed. On the following day we came to the mouth of the Sungari; we demanded tribute, but they refused it. At that we seized the men and beat many of them. We journeyed on for seven days and came upon great nomad camps of seventy to eighty yurts. All of them we humbled, and took possession of their women and cattle."

In this way Khabarov came close to the spot on which today stands the city of Khabarovsk, named in his honour. There lived the Ashan tribe. They gave no sign of hostility. Khabarov sent a hundred of his men to catch fish. As they were so engaged the Ashans fell upon them. Khabarov estimated the number of the tribesmen at eight hundred to a thousand. But he had three cannons. He beat off the attack and inflicted a cruel punishment on the "perfidious" natives.

News of the happenings on the Amur soon reached Peking. Chinese generals marched out. In the neighbourhood of the present Khabarovsk they gave battle. Khabarov had two hundred

and six men; the Chinese numbered some thousands. When the battle was over the Chinese left many dead on the field, and also seventeen muskets, two cannons, eight silken flags, eight hundred and thirty horses, and a large quantity of provisions. Khabarov had lost ten dead and seventy-eight wounded.

The supplies he had won enabled Khabarov to pass the winter in plenty on the scene of his victory. The fame of his deeds of heroism and the rumour that the way to the Amur was open began to have their effect. Whole companies of reckless young fellows made their way to him from the north. They had had the support of the voyevod, or they would scarcely have been able to take cannon with them. In April 1652 Khabarov received reinforcements of a hundred and seventeen men from Yakutsk. They brought powder and shot with them.

Those were precious gifts. But with the growth of his forces it became more and more difficult for him to retain the mastery over them. "We have conquered the country; that's enough," said his Cossacks. The nucleus of his troops, his "old guard," consisted of mercenaries. They had gained rich booty; their hardships had been worth while.

Khabarov returned up the Amur. At the beginning of August a considerable section of his forces mutinied and fell upon him. He was unable to reduce them to obedience.

In Moscow his deeds were likened to those of Yermak. Khabarov had raised the turnpike on the Amur, as Yermak had raised the barrier before all Siberia. Now Khabarov's conquests must be safeguarded and brought under the control of the State. In 1653 the voyevod Zinoviev reached the Amur. He took with him fresh reinforcements, fresh powder and shot, and a new commander. The transfer of authority took place at the mouth of the Zeya. Khabarov showed the same strange passivity as at the mutiny of his Cossacks; without protest he accompanied Zinoviev back to Moscow, where a mass of denunciations awaited him.

There was plenty of cause for them. Khabarov had made many prisoners on his way, and especially many women captives. What had become of them? They were serving the conquerors as slaves; the Cossacks had collected harems from among them. When the Cossacks moved away, they left the women to their fate. If they were weak or ill, the Cossacks threw them into the forest—or into the water.

All Cossacks had done this. But Khabarov was in command, and the choicest of the living spoil had fallen to him in the first place. He was a friend of love; but so were his Cossacks. In this field strife and even murder had never ceased in his ranks. For all these things he was now called to account.

In Moscow his affairs at first took an evil turn. His whole property was confiscated. Still worse threatened. But he still had all the power of his personality and his gift of persuasiveness. He explained to the Muscovite officials what the stories of the Black Dragon meant—the dragon into whose back he had hammered a good many ostrog nails. He told them of the grain that could be brought to Yakutsk, the silver and the silks that streamed from China into Dauria. He told of gold and precious stones, of ermine and blue fox.

And at last he was understood. His property was restored to him, he was made a boyarevich, and he received some villages in the neighbourhood of Ilimsk "for administration."

There he spent the remainder of his life, and there he died. But the things he had achieved lived after him. Even his salt-works, which he had founded long before his expedition to the Amur, proved a solid and profitable enterprise. It still existed, was transferred from Government ownership to that of the merchant Voroshilov, of Irkutsk, and at the beginning of the nineteenth century was taken over once more by the State. His mill, too, continued working, and the farming of the regions he had selected round Kirensk developed and prospered.

He had been cruel, acquisitive, and licentious. He was certainly a very different sort of man from Yermak. But he, too, had shown ability and daring, and had worked for the future of his country.

He raised the turnpike by the Amur, although he had had to face not only the warlike Daurians but the Chinese.

To render his conquests lasting under such circumstances called at least for men of his calibre, and such men were not at once forthcoming. The command of his troops was taken over by the Cossack "chieftain" Stepanov; the new commander wintered on the lower Amur in the country of the Gilyaks. In the spring he made a needless diversion to the Sungari. He had received a fresh reinforcement of fifty men, and perhaps this was the incentive for the rash adventure. After a few weeks' sail up the river he was met by a strong body of Chinese troops, and at the end of a desperate fight he was compelled to retire. He had lost time and men, and his troops had lost discipline. On his return journey he continually recruited small bodies of Cossacks who had come abroad in search of fortune. These adventurers further helped in the crumbling of discipline. Hastily he erected an ostrog by the Kumara, and he passed the winter there. In the spring of 1655 the Chinese fell upon him there once more. They laid siege to the ostrog for three weeks. But they failed to capture it and withdrew, after burning all his boats.

There was Stepanov with a starving and undisciplined horde. Instead of erecting permanent fortifications, instead of either

fighting a decisive battle with the Chinese or returning home, he wandered, to no purpose at all, for two years up and down the Amur, searching for a region in which he could collect food. His men robbed and pillaged wherever they found the chance to do so. And other small groups of Cossacks did the same independently.

In June 1658 he found Chinese regular troops facing him at the confluence of the Amur and the Sungari; and he was helpless. The Chinese smote him hip and thigh; 230 men of his force managed to break through and escape along the Amur; 180 fled across the mountains, and the remaining 270 disappeared.

Stepanov himself was in all probability killed, with the greater part of the missing; some of the latter were taken prisoner. The Chinese treated the prisoners well, settling them in the neighbourhood of Peking and giving them Chinese wives. It is said that their descendants still live there—slant-eyed, red-haired, and pugnacious.

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The Black Dragon was in the power of the Chinese. Scattered groups of Cossacks fell one by one into their hands and were wiped out. The ostrog of Albazin was reduced to ashes.

The Russians did not retreat far. They left the Amur, but entrenched themselves on the Shilka. In the same year in which Stepanov was killed, and in which Russian penetration along the Amur seemed to have been ended, the ostrog of Nerchinsk was built, where the Nercha flows into the Shilka. The voyevods of Nerchinsk made no further attempt to push on again to the Amur.

But the elemental pressure from the interior of Siberia continued. What the voyevods refrained from doing, others did. Six years after the complete victory of the Chinese, there arose in the heart of the land of Dauria another conqueror.

He was a Pole named Nikifor Chernigovskiy. Probably he had been taken prisoner by the Russians in the war Moscow waged with Poland in 1658 over the Ukraine. He had settled in eastern Siberia in the ostrog of Ustkut, and was overseer of the salt-works there. One day Obukhov, voyevod of Ilimsk, came to the ostrog of Ustkut on a tour of inspection. He was hospitably received by Chernigovskiy as overseer of the salt-works. The voyevod took a liking to this new place, and still more to Chernigovskiy's wife. The young Polish woman would probably have attracted notice even in a less remote spot; here, where the Kuta and the Lena flowed together, she seemed to the voyevod another Helen of Troy. When he had completed his business, and had praised the overseer for the good state of the salt-works, he returned to Ilimsk—taking with him Chernigovskiy's lovely young wife.

Khabarov had done just the same in his day, and fortune had befriended him. But where Khabarov had succeeded Obukhov was

less fortunate. The voyevod had not yet reached Ilimsk when Chernigovsky, with a company of loyal comrades, fell upon him, killed his guards, and with his own hand cut the voyevod's throat. Chernigovsky thereupon declared the voyevod's whole fortune to be his, Chernigovsky's. What he did with his wife is not known. His biographers make no mention of her in their account of his further career, a fact in itself significant.

Chernigovsky went on to the Amur. He made straight for Albazin, or rather its ashes. At once he set to work. He erected fortifications, and then began to exact tribute in the form of the great, thick-furred, once famous "Albazin" sable.

Chernigovsky lived fairly comfortably, but the memory of the killing of the voyevod of Ilimsk gave him no peace. Accordingly he began, on his own initiative, to send some of the thick-furred sables to Nerchinsk, to voyevod Pashkov; and if he found he had a good stock of the very best sables—"specialities"—he sent a mission to Moscow with them. It was Yermak's classic technique, and it had never failed to yield positive results.

In Moscow there was an inquiry into the Obukhov affair. On March 15, 1672, Chernigovsky was condemned in his absence to death, and forty-six of his accomplices to severe flogging. But this was merely *pro forma*. The incapable voyevod had certainly fallen at the hand of Chernigovsky, but not without reason, and then Chernigovsky had led the Cossacks back to the Amur. And the sables were really magnificent specimens. The mission returned with the Tsar's full pardon.

By the time when Moscow sent the new voyevod Tolbuzin to the land of Dauria, fields had already been tilled round Albazin, gardens laid out, and a large village built. There was busy life everywhere. A monk, Germogen, who had been living at Albazin, had founded a monastery in the neighbourhood. In the monastery was a universally venerated ikon of the Holy Virgin. Settlers began to come.

But this idyll did not last. The Chinese neighbour was still there! And China was undergoing important changes. The old, effete Ming dynasty had been replaced by the powerful emperors of the Manchu line. This change had already shown itself in the resistance offered to Khabarov and Stepanov; and in 1662 the energetic and warlike Kiang-Hi had ascended the throne. He had no intention of giving anything up; on the contrary, he was out to add to his possessions. He declared in unmistakable terms that he claimed all lands that lay round China proper. He built fortresses in Manchuria—at Mergan, Tsitsihar, and Aigun—and placed garrisons in them.

In June 1685 Albazin was besieged by a Chinese regular army. The commander of the garrison of Albazin was Boyarevich

Tolbuzin. The Chinese, however, had great quantities of artillery. On the first day of the siege the garrison lost a hundred men. Tolbuzin had no reserves of grain. After a few days he capitulated, under honourable conditions: the Chinese allowed the garrison to retain its weapons, and provided it with horses and food. Tolbuzin took the venerated ikon and went to Nerchinsk.

The Chinese burned down Albazin a second time, and returned in triumph to Tsitsihar.

Under orders from Moscow the voyevod of Nerchinsk stopped all war preparations against the Chinese, and instructed Tolbuzin to proceed to Yeniseisk. But Tolbuzin could not so lightly accept the ignominy of his capitulation. He collected a new force and determined to set out again for Albazin.

At the end of August 1685 he carried out his intention, and began to rebuild Albazin a third time, on its ashes. He built it far better than before, the work being under the direction of an experienced man, a German officer. The Russians called the officer Afanasii Ivanovich Baidon; his real name is difficult to reconstruct from the Russian transliteration. It may have been von Beuthen; we know, in any case, that he was a "von" and had been taken prisoner by the Russians when serving as a lieutenant in the Polish army. He was promoted captain and sent to Dauria. He drew a map of that country—the earliest extant, since Khabarov's map has not been preserved. Baidon ended his days in the high position of voyevod of Verkholensk, at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Peking was much closer to the Amur than was Moscow. In Moscow two minors, Ivan and Peter, occupied the Tsar's throne; in Peking the resolute Kiang-Hi ruled alone. On July 7, 1686, Albazin was once more besieged. A force of more than eight hundred men was in occupation of the town under Tolbuzin. He had twelve cannon, a hundred and thirty poods of powder, and sixty poods of shot. The Chinese army was ten thousand strong and had over a hundred cannon.

Tolbuzin vindicated his honour. Energetically he organized the defence; he himself led a sally, and died in it. The command passed to Baidon.

The Chinese failed to take Albazin. After ten months' siege they retired in May 1687. About that date negotiations had already begun between the Chinese and Russian Governments. Peace was to be concluded.

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Moscow was then concentrating its attention and its whole strength on Poland, the Ukraine, and the Baltic. The one concern of the Kremlin was for the financing of the war in the West. The

exchequer was drained empty, and what was wanted was gold. Trade with China offered the means of getting it: China was the best market in the world for Siberian furs. For the sake of opportunities of trade with China, Moscow was ready to renounce the land of Dauria. The voyevods of Yakutsk had gone hungry in the past; they could continue to do so.

Moscow had long been cultivating friendly relations with China. While Cossacks were settling along the Amur, envoys from the Kremlin journeyed to Peking. Immediately after Khabarov's second expedition the "Tsar's courier," Fyodor Baikov, had hastened thither. Four years later Boyarevich Perphilyev was sent with a letter from the Tsar to Bogdo Khan; ten years after this the Bokharan merchant Setkul Albin was sent; and a further eight years on a real "Minister" was appointed, Nikolaus Spaphar, an experienced Moldavian diplomat in the Russian service. All of these offered the Chinese peace and regular commercial relations. But the Chinese were not interested in trade; they were much more concerned about Chinese ceremonial. All these Russian envoys showed themselves lacking in the due reverence for the Son of Heaven—and so each one of them returned home with no answer. After a further decade, when the Chinese had sent a real army to the Amur, it was resolved in the Kremlin to bring the matter to a head at any price.

In 1685 a mission left Moscow under Fyodor Golovin. His task was to conclude a lasting peace with China and to procure trading rights. His instructions were to establish the river Amur as the frontier line between the two empires.

While, however, Golovin was travelling across Siberia—it took him two years—the Chinese had already captured Albazin once and had set siege to it a second time. Revised instructions were urgently dispatched to Golovin. In one communication he was left at liberty to give up the Amur as far as the mouth of the Zeya, and in the other even to renounce Albazin, which virtually meant renouncing the Amur; for Albazin was the only real Russian stronghold on the river.

Golovin was a statesman of outstanding ability. The dying Tsar Alexis had entrusted his son Peter to him. Both earlier and at a later time Golovin performed important services for his Government, and not for it alone, and he was ultimately rewarded with the title of Count of the Holy Roman Empire. He was an expert on Siberian affairs: he had grown up at Tobolsk, where his father had been voyevod. On his mission he was accompanied by an astute diplomat, Kornitsky, and by Vlassov, the able voyevod of Nerchinsk.

Kiang-Hi, too, was represented by his best advisers. At the head of his plenipotentiaries stood—or lay, rather, for he was



carried in a palanquin—Prince Som-Go-Tu, commander of the palace guards and “mandarin of the first class,” described in the Latin text of his credentials as “*Praetorianorum militum praefectus, interioris palatii Palatinus, Imperii consiliarius*” (“prefect of the Praetorian soldiery, Palatine of the interior palace, counsellor of the Empire”). He was accompanied by Prince Tong-Kou-Kiang, an uncle of the Emperor, and also by four bonzes “of the very highest class.”

What sort of a train did such men require? In addition to the usual copyists, adjutants, physicians, priests, chamberlains, cooks, and so on, each had two sword-bearers, an umbrella-bearer, and a pipe-bearer, with deputies. These shadows of their lords alone formed a company of thirty! In addition there were the body-guards. When the Chinese announced to begin with that their contingent would consist in all of five hundred persons, and when they subsequently raised this figure to a thousand, Golovin was in no way surprised. His own mission counted almost as many members.

Amid the shimmer of the cloth of gold of the magnificent bonzes were two modest and inconspicuous black soutanes. They covered the Christian bodies of the two interpreters, Father Gerbillon and Father Péreyra. The former was a Frenchman, a mathematician and historian; the latter a Spaniard, a philosopher and musician. Both were accomplished geographers and astronomers, both were familiar with the Chinese and Mongol tongues, and both were members of the Society of Jesus.

From the time when Saint Francis Xavier, Loyola's fellow-militant, had yielded up his spirit on the island of St John, the Jesuits had never interrupted their activities in China. Sometimes they had been reluctantly tolerated, sometimes caged and killed. But at all times they glided like black shadows through every door—even through locked doors. After the arrival at Peking of the German Jesuit Adam Schaal, of Cologne, they finally secured a firm footing. Schaal gained immense influence under the Ming dynasty, and succeeded in retaining it under the Manchus. He was clearly esteemed by the new emperor, who entrusted him with the reform of the Chinese calendar. But even he, toward the end of his days, fell into disgrace, through the intrigues of the Chinese astronomers. He was thrown into prison, found guilty, and sentenced to be cut into one thousand six hundred pieces. After this verdict had been pronounced, however, the earth shook beneath the judges' feet and the walls of the palaces collapsed, so that the prison warders hastened to liberate their mighty captive. His fellow-workers, however, Christian converts who were but Chinese, were beheaded.

Yet the dudgeon of the Chinese astronomers was thoroughly

understandable. Since the Jesuits had begun their infallible prediction of eclipses of sun and moon, the star of Chinese astronomy had been in decline. And the prestige of the Christian religion had been correspondingly in the ascendant. At the outset of Kiang-Hi's rule the Christian community of the Jesuits in China numbered 257,000 souls; they possessed 159,000 churches! The Dominicans had twenty-one churches, the Franciscans only three.

Golovin gauged very accurately the part played by the modest "interpreters" among the gold-robed mandarins. Spaphar before him had negotiated in Peking less with the bonzes than with the Jesuit Verbiest, who taught the Chinese astronomy—and also cannon-founding.

The influence of the Jesuits at Kiang-Hi's court was immense. The Emperor was a pupil of theirs. They instructed him not only in music but in geography. The Jesuits compiled a map of China, and Kiang-Hi was the first Chinese emperor who gained a conception of the limits of his empire. The instruction in geography bore good fruit.

The Jesuits saw through the intentions both of the Chinese and of the Russians. They had long been interested in Siberia, and Pater Avril had tried to travel across Siberia to China. He had been escorted from Astrakhan to Moscow, but was not allowed to proceed farther. In Moscow, however, the then all-powerful statesman Prince Golitsyn had very candid conversations with him, in Latin, and even acquainted his learned guest with Spaphar's reports on his journey to China.

Yes, such "interpreters" were of great value. Golovin was well aware of this. He tried to assure himself of their co-operation, sent presents to Gerbillon and Péreyra, and promised them "the Tsar's favour." The Jesuits accepted the presents and privily conveyed the message to him that they were interested not only in sables and ermines but in "good wine." But they knew that they were being jealously watched by the Chinese. They had the confidence of the Chinese emperor, and it was natural that the Chinese connexion should matter more to them than a Russian one, particularly since the Muscovites were Christians but heretics, and thus far worse than simple Chinese heathen.

The mandarins were less in earnest in seeking the success of their mission. We must not forget that at that moment Chinese regular troops had marched out to the Amur. Thus the "prefect, palatine, and counsellor" had at his disposal not only the body-guard a thousand strong but an army of fifteen thousand with a hundred cannon cast under the direction of Pater Verbiest. That was no easy pudding for Golovin to digest. The Jesuits were no more than a couple of raisins in it.

What but failure could be expected for the Russian mission,

when Moscow had already abandoned the Amur? Even things that had been in its favour turned against it. After Golovin's arrival events had happened at Selenginsk which had once more worsened the situation. After a long civil war the Kalmuk tribes in Dzungaria had united under the rule of the mighty conqueror Galdan. This new "successor of Genghis Khan" had conquered Turkestan, and in 1686 had beaten the Mongol princes—vassals of Kiang-Hi—and pursued them eastward, that is to say toward China. This was far from bad news for the Russians—an enemy of the Chinese had come on the scene to weaken them, and an ally of the Russians, an ally who naturally would seek their aid. The brave Kalmuk leader saw this, but too late. Part of his army, after its victory over the Mongol princes, marched north, gathering Buryat and Manchurian recruits on its way, and fell upon Selenginsk. Here the exiled Ukrainian hetman Mnogogreshny came to the aid of Golovin. Together the two withstood the enemy, and then went over to the attack, defeated him, and drove him out of Transbaikalia.

Had this assault on Selenginsk been ordered by Galdan? That would have been folly. Yet, when victories mount to the head of a conqueror, he is often led into folly. In any case, matters had gone from bad to worse for Golovin. He recognized how weak was his position. He saw Kiang-Hi's army in front of him on the Amur, and he knew that Galdan's hordes were in his rear. In order to increase the distance from them, he agreed to the proposal of the Chinese that the negotiations should be carried on not at Selenginsk but at Nerchinsk. This, however, was one more mistake, for Nerchinsk lay close to the Chinese frontier, and close also to the Shilka, along which the Chinese envoys were able to maintain secure liaison with their military strongholds.

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On August 12, 1689, the envoys of the two empires met between the Shilka and Nerchinsk. In front of Golovin rode five trumpeters and a drummer; behind him came a bodyguard of two hundred and sixty infantrymen with muskets. The Chinese envoy came with a similar guard. The Russians wore brocade caftans lined with black sable, the Chinese golden cloaks trimmed with sea-otter and beaver; the Russians came erect on horseback, the Chinese recumbent in palanquins; in magnificence neither side had the advantage. Where the difference came was in the fact that Golovin had at his back in Nerchinsk a detachment of a thousand men, but the Chinese had on the other side of the Shilka an army of fifteen thousand.

In spite of this the negotiations began amid the observance of all due ceremonies. The envoys took their seats opposite one

another in a great tent. In the middle of the tent was a table, covered with a silken, gold-embroidered Persian carpet. On this stood a silver writing-stand and a precious clock that struck the hours.

After the greetings Golovin made a short speech. He spoke of the mutual friendship and traditional love that united the two empires. The misunderstandings that had lately made their appearance must be brought to an end. Enduring commercial relations must be arranged. This required as the first step an agreement on the frontiers. The simplest thing would be to make the Amur the frontier line; the population on its left bank had already recognized the overlordship of the Russian Tsar by paying him regular tribute.

Golovin spoke in Russian, and though the Chinese did not understand a word they nodded approvingly. When the interpreters had translated for them, they nodded still more approvingly. Then Prince Som-Go-Tu spoke. He confirmed Golovin's view of the traditional love between Russians and Chinese, thoroughly endorsed the wish he had expressed for peace and commercial relations, and agreed to allow the frontier to run along the river—but another river.

He was of the opinion that the Lena would correspond better to the interests of the two friendly empires. The Lena was a splendid navigable river. "It would be difficult for anyone to contest," he concluded, "that that river is fixed by Heaven itself as the natural boundary between the two enlightened empires."

Golovin, too, nodded, but only while the prince was speaking. When the interpreters had fulfilled their function he ceased nodding. The Chinese were proposing nothing else than the cession to them of the whole of eastern Siberia and Transbaikalia! It was left to Golovin to be the one to "contest" this.

The Jesuits said later that they were themselves astounded at the Chinese demands. They saw that no peace could be concluded on those terms, and they applied their whole energies at once to reducing the Chinese appetite.

On the following day the Chinese spoke no longer of Transbaikalia and the Lena, but they demanded the Amur in its entirety for themselves, and in addition the Shilka as far as Nerchinsk. In accordance with his instructions, Golovin agreed to cede the Amur as far as Albazin.

After two further sittings the negotiations came to a deadlock. Golovin demanded an official statement from the Chinese envoys of their reasons for breaking off the negotiations. At that moment Gerbillon and Péreya brought forward the compromise proposal that the frontier should follow the course of the Gorbiza, a

tributary of the Shilka. Golovin did not agree to this. He went to Nerchinsk and prepared to depart.

But he could no longer do so. In the night the Chinese had crossed the Shilka and surrounded Nerchinsk. While the envoys had been sitting in the tent and listening to the clock beating time for history, the Chinese had brought up reinforcements. Gerbillon informed Golovin that the Chinese would recognize no other frontier than the Gorbiza. If Golovin insisted on refusing this, Nerchinsk would be stormed.

Golovin was not easily daunted; he had shown this in face of the Kalmuks, and he was to show it later in Sweden. But he had reached the age at which a man no longer makes fine gestures to no purpose. He knew that Nerchinsk, an unfortified town, would be taken and his detachment annihilated. There were no more troops in Siberia. If the Chinese destroyed him they would be able to take Transbaikalia and to push on unopposed as far as the "natural frontier" along the Lena.

Negotiations and bickering continued for a further twelve days. But time was working against the Russians. When the Chinese army had been further reinforced by a Buryat camp of two thousand yurts, Golovin told the "prefect and palatine" that he agreed to the terms.

The treaty was signed on August 27 by the Russian (Julian) calendar, on September 6 by the Gregorian, and by the Chinese calendar on the 24th day of the 7th moon of the 28th year of Kiang-Hi. It was drawn up in Russian, Latin, and Manchurian. The Latin text, the fruit of the ingenious labour of the learned fathers, is regarded as the most reliable.

The borderline between Russia and China was set along the watershed of the Stanovoi range. In the west it ran as far as the Gorbiza and on along the river Argun into the mysterious distance of Mongolia. In the east it extended to the river Ud and lost itself beyond it in the complicated mountain ranges that fall away to the Sea of Okhotsk. With the exception of three rivers in fairly well-known regions, the Gorbiza, the Shilka, and the Argun, the frontier was clear only on paper. Of the regions in question the Russians had only a vague conception, and the Chinese none at all. Thirty-eight years later, in the treaty of Kyakhta, it was still impossible to define the frontier between the Ud and the Sea of Okhotsk. Frontier posts were set up, but only between Transbaikalia and Mongolia.

Only one thing was certain the moment the treaty had been signed—the whole Amur river, including both banks, came under Chinese domination. Albazin had to be destroyed. Golovin himself supervised the work of demolition.

He had only reached Irkutsk—six months later—on his return

journey when envoys from Galdan came to him to offer an alliance against the common enemy. "Oh you idiots!" sighed Golovin, and passed the astonished envoys on to Moscow, to negotiate there about the "alliance."

No tears were shed in the Kremlin over the loss of the Amur. Siberia was not then ready for the Amur; it was not yet felt in Moscow to be the "natural frontier." In the treaty Golovin had secured freedom of travel in China for Russian merchants, and freedom to trade there, and this gain pleased the Kremlin more than the loss of Albazin disturbed it.

Golovin seemed to share this official satisfaction. He realized, none the less, that the contest had not been altogether brilliantly fought at Nerchinsk. He was sore about the perfidy of the Chinese and the "double game" the Jesuits had played. After that the Society of Jesus might abandon all hope of converting the Russian heretics to the true Catholic faith.

In China, on the other hand, their influence grew stronger and stronger. Is it surprising? They were the sponsors of the first treaty that China had concluded with a Christian State, the only one down to 1942 that had been based on the principle of equality of rights, and one which for a hundred and fifty years liberated China from anxieties about a powerful neighbour. Three years after the conclusion of the treaty of Nerchinsk, Kiang-Hi issued a decree under which Chinese were permitted to embrace Christianity.

The Christian god rewarded him for this. With the Russian peril eliminated, Kiang-Hi turned his forces against the Kalmuks and defeated them. The praying drums which the Dalai Lama had sent to the "successor of Genghis Khan" were of no avail: he died a warrior's death.

After him fell, one after another, like mown corn, the other enviers and enemies of the great Emperor. And when at last heaven called its beloved son to itself, in the 6th moon of the 60th year of Kiang-Hi, he left on earth seventy sons and an empire that embraced Dauria, Mongolia, Dzungaria, Sinkiang, and Tibet.

## Chapter 16

### THIRTY WILD YEARS ON THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

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**A**FTER Deshnev's adventures on land and water it had become plain to the Cossacks that there could be no going farther east. Beyond lay the ocean. But there was still land awaiting them.

The way to it had been discovered by Deshnev's rival, Mikhail Stadukhin. In 1647 he had travelled to the river Penshina, on the border of Kamchatka, and had built a small ostrog there.

He returned with news of a new country. The red foxes there were of a size Stadukhin had never before seen, but the great brown bears were as vicious as the Chukchis and were fond of flesh, preferably human. Their furs, however, were twice as long-haired as those of the best bears of the Lena or the Yenisei. But the most interesting animal of all was the sea-otter. This coast marauder protected itself against catching cold with so magnificent a fur that only that of the black fox could compare with it. Thick, silky, soft as down, black and dotted with little silvery hairs—what would the voyevod of Yakutsk, what would the Tsar, say if the Cossacks sent him such a present!

Others came with similar stories. The "prikastchik" of the ostrog by the Anadyr, the representative, that is to say, of the Government for the collection of furs, was at this time Vladimir Atlasov. He was a Russian business man who had come to Siberia because there was no room for him in the infinite spaces of the Muscovite empire. He had thrown himself into the fur business, and as early as 1672 was commissioned to conduct a transport of furs for the Government from Yakutsk to Moscow. It may be assumed that at that time he was at least twenty years old; consequently in 1697, the year in which we find him on the Kolyma, he must have been about forty-five. At that age he entered on his historic career.

After he had heard enough stories about Kamchatka, of which country not all the narrators had a genuine knowledge, Atlasov sent thither one of his own men, Luka Morosko. He gave him a guard of sixteen Cossacks and commissioned him to find out all that was worth knowing about the country, and to collect furs from the inhabitants.

Morosko returned not only with furs, but also with three Koryaks and a mysterious roll of manuscript, of which no one

could make head or tail. It was a Japanese letter, which the Koryaks had obtained from a wrecked Japanese "bussa" (launch).

Atlasov interrogated Morosko and the Koryaks and then proceeded to Yakutsk. The voyevod of Yakutsk approved Atlasov's plan, but furnished him with nothing beyond full authority to take possession of the country. He was suspicious—a fact that is perfectly intelligible in a man with the unusual name Traunicht—"Trustnot!"

The voyevod's suspicion did not in the least discourage Atlasov. He borrowed a hundred and sixty roubles from a merchant of Yakutsk, and bought powder and shot on credit from another one; settlement of these accounts was to be in red foxes.

He returned to the ostrog on the Anadyr, collected a detachment of sixty Russian Cossacks and the same number of Yukagirs, and set out on his expedition. From the estuary of the Penshina he crossed the Kamchatka range. He divided his force into two halves; with one he marched along the west coast of Kamchatka, by the Sea of Okhotsk; the other half, under the faithful Morosko, marched south along the east coast that faced the ocean.

Atlasov soon discovered a peculiarity of the soil of Kamchatka: it made even the most peaceful people bellicose. In any case, the Yukagirs were not the most peaceful of people: one dark night they fell upon the sleeping Cossacks, killed three, and wounded fifteen; Atlasov himself received three wounds. The Cossacks were not heavy sleepers, and after their awakening those of the Yukagirs who remained alive agreed to march on with them.

This night affair taught Atlasov that union makes strength. He sent for Morosko, and the two halves now proceeded together to the river Kamchatka. Here he built an ostrog, and in token of the conquest of this new land he erected near the ostrog a cross with the inscription: "On July 13 of the year 7205 this cross was erected by the free-lance Vladimir Atlasov and his comrades."

Atlasov's chronology dates from the Creation. Since by this reckoning Christ was born in the year 5508, Atlasov conquered Kamchatka in A.D. 1697.

He had come at the moment when the Kamchadals of the middle course of the Kamchatka river had declared war on their brethren of its lower course. Atlasov was delighted to play a part in the fighting. He assumed command of the "entente" formed by Cossacks, Yukagirs, and middle-course Kamchadals, and led them to a victorious attack. But he was soon called back, because a herd of reindeer which the Kamchadals had left at their base of operations had been attacked by Koryaks. Atlasov pursued the Koryaks for some days and recovered the reindeer. Incidentally "about a hundred and fifty head" of Koryaks were slain.

Atlasov now became a prince of the Kamchadals. The ladies



of his court were not distinguished by exceptional beauty, but their number was large. With his company he marched right across Kamchatka, halting only four days' march from Cape Lopatka. Here he heard of some islands to the south. This was the Russians' first information of the existence of the Kuril Islands.

The new ostrog built was named Verkhne-Kamchatsk. Atlasov left his deputy Seryukov there with a garrison of fourteen Cossacks and thirteen Yukagirs, and then left for the Anadyr and Yakutsk. He reached Yakutsk in February 1700; just twelve months later he was in Moscow, announcing the annexation of Kamchatka and the ardent desire of its population to lay themselves at the feet of the Tsar; in token of this they had sent 3,200 sables, 10 sea-otters, 7 beavers, 4 otters, 10 silver foxes, and 190 red foxes. In addition, he had brought the first Japanese who had ever trodden Russian soil.

A characteristic of the Siberian conquerors of this period was that they were all hard-bitten, good-for-nothing young men, whose trading amounted to robbery. Almost all of them went independently to work, but kept most carefully in touch with Moscow. They sent reports of progress, and followed personally with a speed that to us seems incredible. They staked their lives—and always lost; Moscow staked nothing, and steadily raked in the profits.

When Atlasov reached Kamchatka the natives had told him that there was a Russian living among them. When he met the "Russian" he found him to be a Japanese, probably a survivor from the vessel from which had come the mysterious roll of manuscript which Morosko had taken over. The Japanese was named Denbe and came from Osaka. Atlasov took a liking to him; according to his report this young Japanese was "spruce, polite, and clever," and at the sight of an ikon "he wept sorely, and remarked that they had these same things in his homeland."

Peter the Great took an interest in this captive. Denbe, who in the meantime had learnt a little Russian, was brought before the Tsar, who asked him many questions about Japan. After the audience Peter ordered that the Japanese visitor should be maintained at the cost of the State and helped to learn Russian. In return, Denbe was to teach Japanese to some Russian "sons of nobles."

Eight years later Denbe was admitted to the Orthodox church and given the name of Gabriel. He took service with a widow of stately proportions, and went with her to mass on Sundays.

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Atlasov's report received His Majesty's approval. He was appointed a chieftain with annual pay of ten roubles; for his clothing he received a hundred silver roubles and a piece of

German cloth of the same value. He was regarded with favour in the "Sibirsky Prikas," his statements were listened to attentively, and they were even taken down in writing. And this was wise, for Atlasov's is the best and most informative report in existence on the Kamchatka of his day—better than Bering's. The Cossack had been an unusually keen observer of nature and men; he gave concise and accurate information concerning the geography and the climate of the peninsula, its minerals, plants, animals, and fishes, and the import and export possibilities. Not every consular report of our day could equal Atlasov's!

It was only natural that such a man should be admitted to the best society. When we add to all the rest that, in addition to the sables for the Tsar, he had brought 440 of his own, and those exceptionally fine specimens, it is easy to understand that he passed his time in Moscow most pleasantly.

He left on his return journey with instructions to the voyevod of Yakutsk to afford every assistance to chieftain Atlasov in the recruiting of a Cossack detachment a hundred strong; the voyevod was also to provide him with guns, powder, and shot from his stores, and a flag, and a drum and fife for his detachment; he was also to furnish him with a pood of blue glass beads and a hundred knives, for bartering.

Atlasov began while on his way to select "proper comrades" for his detachment. He knew that great deeds lay ahead of him, and as it was a long way to Kamchatka he started them at once. On the Tunguska river he met a Russian merchant who had a cargo of Chinese goods. The merchant was carrying silk, tea, and spices on board his vessels. A short scuffle, and all these things passed into the hands of Atlasov and his comrades—goods to the value of sixteen thousand roubles.

Probably Atlasov was making a leisurely journey and doing himself well on the way. At all events, the merchant reached Yakutsk before him. On his arrival Atlasov was at once arrested, with ten of his comrades; they were found guilty, whipped, and thrown into prison. The booty was returned to its owner.

This Vladimir Atlasov was a man of courage and ability, but he had not come out of the same mould in which Yermak had been fashioned. Kamchatka, however, had been his idea, and he had built the first ostrog there. His work prospered. But how difficult and how sanguinary it was!

Seryukov, who had remained behind in Verkhne-Kamchatsk, lived in friendship and harmony with the Kamchadals. The friendship was accounted for by the fact that his detachment was small and collected no tribute from the Kamchadals. After three years he grew bored with sitting there with nothing to do, and returned to Anadyrsk. On his way he had to pass through Koryak

territory. The Koryaks had only too good a recollection of Atlasov and of the sabres which "they" had sent by him to the Tsar. They killed Seryukov and his fourteen comrades.

By now, however, fresh troops were on the way to Kamchatka. In the place of Atlasov, who was in prison, Zinoviev came as their head. After him came Kolessov.

Kolessov went seriously to work. In 1705 he built an ostrog on the west coast of Kamchatka, by the river Bolshoi. Here arose later the city of Bolsheryetsk, the administrative centre of all Kamchatka. Kolessov imposed regular payments of tribute on Koryaks and Kamchadals, and in order to make all resistance on their part impossible he introduced "tax registers," in which he entered the names of the persons liable for tribute. Anyone whose name was in the register knew that he was helpless: he must supply furs or jump into the water. A book is a most powerful worker of magic.

Kolessov stayed three years in Kamchatka, and on his way back to Yakutsk he was met by a successor who had already started, Boyarevich Protopopov. The boyarevich got only as far as the territory of the warlike Koryaks, where he met his death. When the news of his assassination reached Yakutsk another boyar's son, Shelkovnikov, was sent in his place. He left with an escort of ten men. The whole party lost their lives at the same spot as Protopopov.

Kolessov had scarcely turned his back on Bolsheryetsk when the Kamchadals burned down the ostrog and exterminated its garrison.

At that point Atlasov was liberated. On leaving prison he petitioned the voyevod of Yakutsk for an interview. "Let me go to Kamchatka," he said, "it is my land. The Tsar will be glad to receive furs from there. And you, too, will have no reason to regret it."

Furs were coming in from Kamchatka very unsatisfactorily. The "boyars' sons" were sending none, and most of them were not even themselves returning. Atlasov had had four years in prison. The voyevod appointed him commandant of all armed forces in Kamchatka. As he left, however, the voyevod instructed him not to annoy the natives; and he expressly deprived him of all right to condemn Cossacks to death. Traunicht still trusted him not.

And with good reason. Atlasov collected a force in Yakutsk, armed it well, and set off. But before he had reached Anadyrsk he felt the need for compensation for the solitude and the privations of his years in prison. By the time he had reached Kamchatka he had made enemies not only of the Kamchadals but of his Cossacks.

He took the reins of government in his hand, and began by imposing severe punishment on the Kamchadals for their rising

at Bolsheryetsk. When he reached the coast the Koryaks fell upon him. He defeated them, however, and returned to Verkhne-Kamchatsk with rich spoil.

He felt himself to be once more the lord of Kamchatka. Furs now came in in great quantity; but the Cossacks began to disappear rapidly. The wine of power had gone to Atlasov's head. If a Cossack dared to quarrel with him, out came the hetman's sword and the man was struck down. He took from a Kamchadal a precious black fox which the native had set aside for delivery to the Government; when he was told that this fur was one of those intended for the Tsar, he replied: "My wench Anastasia is my Tsaritsa."

Such emotional refinements were above the heads of the Cossacks. In December 1707, five months after Atlasov's arrival, rebellion broke out. Atlasov was thrown into prison, one of the Cossacks was elected in his place, and the hetman's possessions were shared out—1,200 sables, 414 red foxes, and 75 sea-otters, "acquired" in five months! Since Atlasov had illegally accumulated this property, the Cossacks divided it among themselves. As God-fearing men, they did not forget the first missionary to Kamchatka, Archimandrite Martian, to whom they awarded Atlasov's own sable fur, a black fox, and the "Tsaritsa" Anastasia. The monk, however, declined these offerings.

Atlasov escaped from his prison and fled to another ostrog, that of Nizhne-Kamchatsk. He called upon the commandant of the ostrog to hand over to him. The commandant gave the ex-hero a dry answer: "Stop here if you like, but you had better lie low!"

In 1709 a new chieftain arrived, Pyotr Chirikov. He took over his duties without any knowledge of the rising against Atlasov. He made an expedition to the Bolshoi, where the Koryaks surrounded his force and laid siege to it for four weeks. Of his forty men eight were killed and almost all the rest wounded. Chirikov barely managed to fight his way through to Verkhne-Kamchatsk.

A year later Captain Mironov came to relieve him. Chirikov turned over to his successor. At that moment there were more than enough administrators of all sorts in Kamchatka—the new chief, Mironov; the old one, Chirikov; the true one, in his own opinion, Atlasov; and two coming ones, Anziferov and Kosyrevsky.

These last two hatched a conspiracy. When Chirikov and Mironov set out together for Nizhne-Kamchatsk, the rebels killed Mironov with little ceremony, and would have done the same to Chirikov, but he succeeded in making it clear to them that he could not die without first repenting. This argument impressed them, and Kosyrevsky especially. He said he was ready to allow Chirikov a reasonable time for repentance. But when the Cossacks

found Atlasov at Nizhne-Kamchatsk they made an end of him without any such respite.

The regime of the usurpers Kosyrevsky and Anziferov had now begun. The Kamchadals did not notice any difference—the methods of administration remained unchanged.

After the Cossacks had held Chirikov in chains for three months—an adequate period for repentance—they drowned him in the Kamchatka. Then they marched to the Bolshoi and “pacified” the insurgent Kamchadals.

At that moment the new commandant, Savostyanov, arrived. Anziferov had no desire to fight him. He preferred to get his own position legalized. He called on Savostyanov to “pay his respects” to him, and presented to him at the same time twenty-five of his bright young fellows. At the sight of them Savostyanov hastened to confirm Anziferov in his office of fur collector. Anziferov now resumed his activities on a legal basis and with redoubled energy. The results soon showed themselves. On one of his journeys he and his twenty-five Cossacks were surrounded by the Koryaks. The Cossacks were confined in a small blockhouse, and hoped to be able to hold their own as they had captured a few Koryaks. The besiegers, however, set fire to the blockhouse with all who were in it. According to the traditional story, the Koryak hostages shouted to their fellow-tribesmen: “Burn away, don’t bother about us, so long as he burns too!”

The death of Anziferov eased the situation for the new commandant. There were some among the Cossacks who felt that things had gone too far. Savostyanov served out some sentences of imprisonment and had a few men whipped. In 1714 he personally took to Yakutsk, for the first time after seven years’ interruption, the prescribed quantity of furs for the Government. Such a consignment was totally unexpected—13,280 sables, 3,282 red foxes, 48 other foxes, and 259 sea-otters!

In Savostyanov’s absence rebellion flamed up again everywhere. Kamchadals, Koryaks, Cossacks rose in revolt. Yerygin, the official in charge, was beaten and tortured by the Cossacks until he declared that he would don the cowl and turn monk. Astonishing, this religiosity of the Kamchatka assassins. They let Yerygin go at once, and he entered the monastery.

It may be that Kosyrevsky was the propagator of this religious enthusiasm; it is, indeed, very probable, for he marched through Kamchatka looting and raping and murdering and, at every opportunity, preaching and personally baptizing Kamchadals in the true faith.

In 1712 the power in Kamchatka passed into the hands of our old acquaintance Kolessov. He had been in Moscow, where he had absorbed the new ideas of Peter the Great, and he was burning

with zeal for the restoration of peace and order in Kamchatka. He investigated the murder of Atlasov, Mironov, and Chirikov, hanged some of the Cossacks, and had many whipped. He even managed to get Kosyrevsky into prison, though not for long. He liberated him on condition that Kosyrevsky went on an expedition to explore the Kuril and Japanese islands. The latter proviso was a result of that conversation of the Tsar's with Denbe.

Kosyrevsky built kochi and sailed away. He took possession only of the first two of the Kuril Islands; he held a mass in thanksgiving for their union with the Russian empire, took from the inhabitants all their furs, and sailed on. Fortunately for Japan, he was compelled by a hurricane to turn back.

An interesting man was this Mr Kosyrevsky, it must be allowed. He was a Pole, but an ardent follower of the Orthodox church. A swindler and a murderer and a mystic. He was the first to set foot on the Kuril Islands from Siberia, and brought back a map of them that served as the basis for all the maps of that period. The spoil, however, which he brought from the Kuril Islands and had collected for himself was taken from him by a yet more shady comrade.

The rulers of Kamchatka at that time never ruled long: there were always others who wanted to make the acquaintance of the Kamchatkan sables. In 1713 yet another commandant came, as successor to Kolessov, an aristocrat by birth named Yeniseisky. He started for Yakutsk with Kolessov, bringing a rich tribute of furs. But, like so many before them, these two found the fateful turnpike lowered against them: they were murdered with their guards. The furs returned into the hands of their first owners.

The voyevod of Yakutsk did not take the loss of the furs "lying down." He sent his men with a consignment of tobacco. And for the tobacco the Yukagirs delivered up their furs with pleasure. The furs were of no use to them.

So things went on for many years. After the disastrous end of Kolessov and Yeniseisky the route from the Kolyma to Kamchatka, through the lands of the Koryaks and the Chukchis, was abandoned as impracticable. The turnpike Atlasov had raised had been lowered again. Who can say what would have happened to Kamchatka if at the same period it had not occurred to Moscow that the peninsula could also be reached by sea? In 1716 the first ship crossed the Sea of Okhotsk and sailed up the river Tigil.

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But whether it was reached by land or sea, Kamchatka remained what it was. Administrators, commandants, hetmans—all of them continued to collect furs, and all were killed by the natives, who were killed in turn by the succeeding administrators, com-

mandants, and hetmans. It became a question of who could hold out longest. It proved in the end that it was the commandants and hetmans who could.

In vain did the clergy try to intervene in the struggle. They were preachers in the wilderness. Even the Chrysostom of Kamchatka, Kosyrevsky, had no influence. Our Kosyrevsky had, indeed, begun preaching peace and goodwill on earth. He was thrown into prison again, and apparently also suffered a mild whipping. Then his soul turned finally to God—he put on the cowl and founded a monastery in Kamchatka.

He prayed a great deal, and the tale of his conversion to holiness began to attract the faithful, who brought all sorts of offerings with them. When a sufficiency of pious gifts had accumulated, Kosyrevsky gathered them up and returned into the sinful world. He left Kamchatka and turned up in 1724 at Yakutsk. There he took up a contract for the erection of an iron-works. While the works were under construction he drank away all the money, his own and the Government's, so that he had to go once more to prison.

In prison he devoted himself yet again to spiritual activities—this time for good and all. This contributed to his discharge from prison. On emerging he occupied himself with coining false money. He was caught, but escaped and was not recaptured until he reached the neighbourhood of Tobolsk. He was whipped and was to have been hanged—but at that moment the opportunity came to him for new deeds.

The Cossack leader Afanasii Shestakov offered his services for the final suppression of the predatory activities of the Koryaks and Chukchis. He went to St Petersburg and placed before the Senate not only his plan of campaign but a map he had brought with him, a map of eastern Siberia and Kamchatka with all the adjacent islands. On this map eastern Siberia looked like a snail stretching out two horns, Cape Chukotsky and Kamchatka.

Shestakov's plan was accepted, and ample resources were placed at his disposal. In 1727 his expedition was approved, and in the following year he was at Yakutsk. There he learned that Kosyrevsky was talking in prison of gold-yielding islands he had discovered in the estuary of the Lena.

Shestakov put the "monk" in a koche and sent him down the Lena. Before he reached the mouth of the river, Kosyrevsky's vessel was broken up in the ice, and he went in haste, without touching Yakutsk, straight to Moscow. There he began a new life—"absolutely definite and unalterable"—by collecting gifts for the conversion of the natives of Kamchatka to Christianity.

Meanwhile Shestakov had reached Okhotsk. From there he sailed to the river Penshina, in order to reduce the Koryaks to submission. The Koryaks received him as they had received

not a few before him. On March 14, 1730, in the course of a bloody struggle, his neck was pierced by an arrow. He sank into a sleigh, and the reindeer harnessed to it took him straight to the camp of the Koryaks. They pulled the arrow out of his neck and cut off his head.

His enterprise was continued by his successor, Captain Pavlutsky. Pavlutsky, in accordance with Shestakov's instructions, sent another ship to the north. Captain Fyodorov sailed in it in 1732 through the Bering Straits, sailed on to the Diomed Islands, landed there, and even suggested to the inhabitants that they should pay him tribute; they courteously declined. On this he sailed farther, as far as a "great country" unknown to him, probably Prince of Wales Cape; here he anchored a couple of miles off shore and talked to the Eskimos who rowed out to him; from them he learned that there were forests and rivers and many animals in the "great country."

Ivan Fyodorov was thus the first navigator to reach the coast of Alaska from the west—the first to see both shores of Bering Straits, their real discoverer! He should have landed and assured to himself the fame for this deed. But his crew, sick and exhausted by the long voyage, insisted on his turning back.

He was now no favourite of fortune. He came back, gravely ill with scurvy, and soon died of it. The report on his discoveries was made by the surveyor, Gvozdoz, who had accompanied him—and the historians attributed all Fyodorov's deeds to Gvozdoz!

All was quiet then in Kamchatka. The Kamchadal risings had ceased, because the native population had fallen considerably. In 1731, during Shestakov's expedition, there was once more a general rising, several ostrogs were burnt down, and all the small bodies of Cossacks that had gone any distance into the country were exterminated. The hero of this rising was the Nana-sahib of Kamchatka, Kharchin, a baptized Kamchadal. He was as strong as a bear, and could run so swiftly that he could overtake a wild reindeer—according to his saga. Having been baptized, he regarded himself as a European, and dressed accordingly when he instigated the rising: he wore a Russian woman's skirt and above it a pope's robe. Like many other fighters for freedom, he ended his days on the gallows.

Soon after this rising a "student" of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Krashenninnikov, came to Kamchatka. He wrote the classic work on the peninsula. It remains to this day the best book ever written about Kamchatka.

Krashenninnikov was an upright and pious man. He often clothes his excellent observations in the form of a moral judgment. Thus he writes, for instance:

"Of God, of vice, and of virtue the Kamchadals have an entirely





## Chapter 17

### THE TESTAMENT OF PETER THE GREAT

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**K**AMCHATKA was in Russian hands. What was there beyond it?

Tsar Peter, above all others, wanted to know that. He had discussed the question with countless people in Germany, England, France. In Paris Guillaume Delisle de la Croyère, the famous savant and "premier géographe du Roi," had told of the land of Gama and the Terra de Jéso, the mysterious lands which were supposed to lie somewhere between Japan and America. Dutchmen talked to Peter about Japan. In Moscow little Denbe had talked to him about Japanese copper. Kolessov, when commandant of Kamchatka, had followed up Kosyrevsky's stories with a report of rumours of gold on the Kuril Islands. On some of the European maps in the Tsar's possession a fantastic strait, that of Aniam, was shown between Asia and America—a century-old product of cartographic fantasy, resulting from an obscure passage in Marco Polo's narrative.

The direct incentive, however, for the equipment of an expedition did not come from any of these men. A thinker of genius shook hands with the ruler of genius, and from that hand-clasp sprang the great geographical enterprise. The thinker was Leibnitz. As early as 1697 he had drawn up a memorandum in which he made the suggestion that an expedition should be sent to clear up the question whether Asia and America were joined together. He repeated the suggestion in 1711, 1712, and 1713; finally, at Pyrmont in 1716, he talked at length to the Tsar in person about his project, and sent the Tsar a memorandum in its support.

All these seeds fell on good soil. In the 'twenties Peter sent out a secret expedition for the exploration of the Kuril Islands. Five of the islands were surveyed, and the leaders of the expedition, Yevreinov and Lushin, at once sent in a report to the Tsar. What they told him has not come to light.

Five weeks before his death Peter summoned General Admiral Count Apraxin. The Tsar knew that Apraxin was no star of the first magnitude; but he was a friend. The "stars" were only too inclined to go their own way, but this one could be trusted to do without demur exactly what he was told.

The Tsar sat in an easy-chair with a warm shawl over his shoulders. His face was bloated, and his cheeks of a malignant

yellow. His protruding, glassy eyes were fixed like a couple of telescopes on the map in front of him. On it the Siberian snail was cautiously stretching its horns out to the Pacific.

The Tsar laid his big hand on the map. "Here—between Siberia and America—is water. The Straits of Aniam. Does that mean that we can sail through the Arctic Ocean to China? What say you?"

The General Admiral thought of various things. It occurred to him that when he had left his palace not all of his drunken guests of the previous evening had yet been carried home. It struck him that he was suffering from heartburn and migraine, and it struck him forcibly that the Tsar had not much longer to live.

"There is water there, Your Majesty. But—troubled water. The Dutch and the English are busy there."

"Why are we not busy too? Why should the Dutch and the English always be the first? Listen! I have long been thinking about it. But other cares have pressed upon me. Now, however, I have not much longer to live."

He searched through his pockets for his handkerchief, lost patience, and sneezed on to the floor between two fingers; then he wiped his nose on the corner of his shawl. Apraxin sobbed softly.

"Come, don't howl! Take this paper and do what it says. Even if I am no longer here—it makes no difference. Don't grudge money! But don't steal it, either! You pack of thieves, you'll see me rise from the grave with the knout in my hand again!"

For a second a wild fire flamed up in the glassy eyes; then it died down. Peter stretched out his hand: Apraxin bent his tearful face over it.

"Now, Fyodor Latveyevich, do that, I beg of you."

On the sheet which Peter handed to the General Admiral was the following, written in the Tsar's hand:

"First: Build one or two ships in Kamchatka or somewhere else.

"Secondly: Sail northwards in them along the coast which (since its course is unknown) seems to form part of the American coast.

"Thirdly: Ascertain where this coast joins America. Sail on to the first inhabited place belonging to Europeans, and find out what that coast is called; go ashore, compile accurate information, draw a map, and come back. PETER."

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Peter's three points formed the most important part of the great task of discovering the sea route to China through the Arctic. The work Sebastian Cabot had begun a hundred and seventy-five years earlier, Peter thus delegated to generations to come. The task was completed a hundred and fifty-three years later by Nordenskjöld.

Peter himself chose the man who was to sail to the Straits of Aniam. His name was Vitus Bering.

Bering was a Dane of quite obscure origin. He had begun his career at sea as a sailor in the service of the Dutch East India Company. He had sailed over many seas and oceans and had reached officer's rank when, somewhere in the Mediterranean, he met the Russian Admiral Senyavin. The Admiral invited him to enter the Russian service. When Peter the Great set down his three points, Captain Bering was a man of forty-four years of age, with twenty years' service in Russian ships. He was a brave officer, an experienced seaman, and a man of great energy. No one could then know that within this iron Viking there dwelt the soul of his fellow-countryman Prince Hamlet.

His first officer was also a Dane, Lieutenant Martin Spanberg. He was a good enough seaman, but a rough and irascible man; when he was reproached for this he always admitted his fiery temper. The second officer, Alexei Chirikov, was one of those young men whose enthusiasm had been roused by the ideas of Peter the Great. He knew his work and was a man of calm, unemotional temperament. He differed from Spanberg not only in the matter of volubility but in most other respects. He was a man of pure soul and a lover of the sea.

Bering's expedition was approved in 1725—after Peter's death. But two more years passed before its members assembled at Okhotsk. There Bering built a ship, which was christened *Fortuna*.

The journey to Okhotsk had been a laborious one, as the company took immense quantities of stores with them. The ships for the expedition had to be built at Okhotsk, and all instruments, tackle, anchors, cables, tar, and sails had to be carried thither. Six hundred and sixty-three horses were used. The road from Yakutsk to Okhotsk was appalling. Spanberg's group were decimated by starvation; many of his men died before they reached the sea.

In two journeys the *Fortuna* carried the expedition to Bolsheryetsk, on the west coast of Kamchatka. From there crews and freight crossed the mountains on the difficult journey to Petropavlovsk. For this purpose Bering mobilized every dog in Kamchatka. Almost all the dogs died on the way. It was this that ultimately provoked the rising of the Kamchadals in 1730-31.

On June 8, 1728, the second ship, the *St Gabriel*, was launched at Petropavlovsk, and on July 13 she set sail with Bering, his two officers, and a crew of forty-one on board. She sailed to the north, in fine weather, keeping all the time in sight of land. The spirits of the ship's company were good, and would have been still

better if the irascible Spanberg had made less use of his curses and his fists.

They sailed steadily on. August came, and with it fog and rain. They sailed round Cape Chukotsky. On August 8 they talked to a Chukchi who had rowed out to them in his skin boat. The Chukchi told them that the land was entirely surrounded by the sea, but that beyond the sea there was a "big island" which was inhabited. On August 11 they sighted an island; Bering named it St Laurentius. On August 12 they sailed on. Bad weather had now definitely set in.

On August 13 Bering had a discussion with his officers. "I think," he said, "that we have already passed round the eastern point of Asia; this followed also from what we heard from the Chukchi to whom we talked on the 8th. Shall we sail on? And if we do, for how long? That is the question."

Prince Hamlet's question.

The temperamental Spanberg suddenly gave evidence of unsuspected caution. "Here," he said, "there is neither port nor forest; the natives are not particularly peaceable; the weather is vile; winter is upon us. The ship and her crew are threatened with destruction. We must make up our minds quickly. I think that with God's help we ought to turn back."

Chirikov had been listening quietly to what the older men said. When he was asked what he thought, he suddenly grew embarrassed.

"Well, what say you?" asked Spanberg, turning to him.

Chirikov cleared his throat, and stammered:

"Candidly—it seems to me that we cannot yet answer the question whether Asia and America are separated from each other by water. To discover the answer, we should have—it seems to me—at least to go on as far as the Kolyma. On the other hand, our instructions are to sail as far as the first place inhabited by Europeans—"

Spanberg burst into laughter. "Winter quarters on the Kolyma estuary—is that what you call a European-inhabited place?"

"Yes; at least—it would be in the sense of the instructions."

"Don't quarrel," said Bering. "That's not the question; the question is whether we are to sail on or not."

"Sail on until—so to speak—we come up against ice."

"And then?"

"Then winter on the coast."

Bering saw objections to wintering. There was no sign of forests anywhere, and how were they to winter without wood for firing? The Chukchis declared that the forests began not far from the coast. But in this matter Bering did not rely on them. He sailed on northwards for three more days; then he turned back,

This was on August 16. The *St Gabriel* had reached 67° 11' N. That means that she had passed through the straits between Asia and America. The sea was free from ice.

On September 1 the *St Gabriel* dropped anchor in the mouth of the Kamchatka river. Bering repeated his attempt in the following summer. But this time he turned back after three days—the weather was against him. He sailed to Okhotsk, and from there he went to St Petersburg.

The Senate, the Admiralty, the Academy of Sciences, all were waiting impatiently for his return. Count Apraxin had not been able to wait for him. After Peter's death he had given himself up entirely to the famous Russian hospitality. Nobody ever left his house sober. On one occasion a guest had declined to go on any longer. At that the General Admiral had dropped on his knees in front of him; then he sat on the floor, reached for the portrait of Peter which he wore round his neck on a gold chain—and gave up the ghost.

But at the Admiralty his old comrades were still serving, and they had promised to carry out Peter's dying wish. They found the results of the expedition disappointing, and made no secret of their opinion. Bering was put on his defence. He was deeply aggrieved.

Were the reproaches levelled against him unjustified? In order to prove that Siberia and America are separated by water he should have sailed on at least as far as the mouth of the Kolyma, that is to say as far as a place that was positively known to be on the north coast of Siberia. That is just what the modest Chirikov had represented to him. When Bering declared on his return that he was now definitely convinced of the existence of an arm of the sea between Siberia and America, he said nothing new; many people were already convinced of it. What was wanted was a demonstration of the fact, and this Bering had not produced. He had had the means of producing it, since he had turned back six weeks before the end of the period in which sailing was possible in those waters.

If only the canker of doubt had not gnawed at his Danish soul! If only he had listened to his Russian officer and sailed on to the end!

\* \* \*

Bering was criticized in St Petersburg, but he was still esteemed as a man and as a navigator. He had loyal friends, and they included Admiral Count Golovin and one of the Ministers, Count Ostermann. Golovin's interest in all Siberian questions was inherited—his father had made the journey to the Amur in order to conclude the treaty of Nerchinsk with the Chinese. At the

time Count Ostermann's interest in Siberia was only theoretical; he did not then know that he was destined to end his days there as a political exile.

These two men's support restored Bering's prestige and his personal confidence. He submitted to the Government various proposals concerning Siberia. He pointed to the need for the development of mining there, and for the improvement of the roads, and for assistance to cattle-breeding. Not content with that, he suggested that he should once more proceed on the exploration of the sea route from Kamchatka to America and to Japan; he proposed to map the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk as far as the mouth of the Amur and to survey the Polar coast of Siberia from the Ob to the Yenisei and from the Yenisei to the Lena.

This was the most ambitious plan of geographical research ever put forward. It had sprung from the genius of Peter the Great and from Bering's thirst for knowledge. The most remarkable thing about it, however, was that it was actually carried out.

Bering's "Great Expedition" was the beginning of the scientific exploration of Siberia. In connexion with it Müller, Fischer, Krashennnikov, Steller, and Gmelin did their work—that General Staff of the sciences that occupied the positions captured by the assault troops of Yermak, Poyarkov, Khabarov, Deshnev, and Atlasov.

The staffing of the expedition could not have been better. At its head was Bering himself. His officers were experienced and reliable men—Spanberg and Chirikov. They took with them as astronomer and geographer Louis Delisle de la Croyère, a half-brother of the Guillaume with whom Peter had talked in Paris. Another half-brother, Joseph Nicolas, was engaged as geographer under the Russian Government. He compiled a special map for Bering's second expedition.

Louis Delisle had already travelled to America—to Canada—but the other way round. He had started various enterprises there, had gone bankrupt, and then had found a position in Russia. He took a complete astronomical observatory with him on the expedition, including a fifteen-foot telescope.

Bering's second scientific colleague bore no resounding name. He was Georg Wilhelm Steller, a young man of twenty-two years. But Steller had already gone far. From Franconia, where he was born, he had gone to Wittenberg, Leipzig, Jena, and Halle, accumulating knowledge and diplomas, and then he had served as a surgeon in the Russian army. From Danzig he had come to St Petersburg with a transport of wounded.

He was a young man with high qualifications, but it was not because of his diplomas but because of his "merry nature" that the famous Archbishop Feofan Prokopovich took a great liking to

him—so great a liking that he not only appointed him to be his medical attendant but composed a Latin poem in his honour.

When Steller heard of the Bering expedition he could no longer endure having nothing better to do than occupy himself with His Grace's digestive troubles. He dreamed of travelling to Japan—he did not think he was "sufficiently robust" for the Polar lands. On the recommendation of the archbishop he was appointed as "Adjunct for Natural History."

Bering's enterprise had one defect, though he blamed the Academy of Sciences for it: it was all too comprehensively organized, and, indeed, overweighted. To get this enormous mass of men and materials from St Petersburg to Kamchatka took *eight years!*

Bering divided the members of the expedition into three groups. One after another they left St Petersburg at the beginning of 1733. The first to reach Okhotsk was Spanberg—after three years; Bering, who had taken the greater part of the material with him, arrived after six years!

There is nothing surprising about that. Journeys to Siberia were always measured in years. In an old book the author, in order to make clear how long a journey through Siberia must take, told in all seriousness the following story:

The Empress Elizabeth desired to make the acquaintance of her most distant subjects, and commanded that six maidens should be sent to her at St Petersburg from Kamchatka. They were selected at Bolsheryetsk. The journey took so long that they all became mothers before their arrival at Irkutsk. In spite of the dismissal of the officer accompanying them, they all reached St Petersburg again pregnant.

Bering had to mobilize men and horses at one place after another. He had to build whole river flotillas, and his demands emptied the Government granaries, since eastern Siberia always suffered from shortage of grain. His group alone consisted of eight hundred to a thousand souls! At the outset of his expedition the local authorities greeted his arrival with peals of bells and sent him on his way with the firing of salutes. But the deeper he penetrated into Siberia, the rarer became the peals and salutes. The local authorities felt they had a grievance, and Bering and his companions no less so.

Frequent mention is made in biographies of Bering of the ill-will of the St Petersburg Government toward him. It even cut down his pay, thus weakening his authority. There is some truth in this. But there was a thoroughly justified feeling in St Petersburg that the expedition was proceeding all too slowly. Bering's pay was reduced in 1738—that is to say when, five years after leaving



the capital, he had got no farther than Irkutsk. Time enough for five pregnancies of the Kamchadal maidens.

Nine years elapsed between the approval of the expedition and Bering's departure from Kamchatka. In those nine years Bering himself had grown nine years older. Instead of fifty-one he was sixty. At that age a captain who has done good service has the right to anchor in the quiet haven of a professorial appointment or at the Admiralty. Instead of this, Bering was crossing the Stanovoy range, building ships, and sailing into the unknown.

The doubts that had troubled him for those nine years had not by any means been dispelled. Far from it—after every communication from St Petersburg and every collision with local authorities they nagged only the more fiercely.

Steller, too, had lost much of his buoyancy. He had not the advantage of Delisle's philosophical calm. "My dear colleague," said the Frenchman, "why all this talk of *Ordnung*? A little disorder is good for us all." But Steller could not help talking of "*Ordnung*." He was ready to help everybody, but he could not refrain from keeping everybody in order.

Spanberg, who was the first to reach Okhotsk, built a ship there, the *Archangel Michael*, refitted the old *St Gabriel*, and got hold of another old schooner. In the years that followed he and Lieutenant Walton explored the Kuril Islands and the Japanese coast.

Bering did not reach Avacha Bay until 1740. In May 1741 he had a conference with his colleagues and a detailed plan was worked out. He himself set out in the *St Peter*, with Steller as physician. Chirikov took over the command on board the *St Paul*; Delisle was to proceed with him. On June 4 the two ships set sail, taking a southward course; for their first objective was to establish the position of Gama Land and the Terra de Jéso.

After sixteen days' sail, in the course of which they sighted no land, they lost sight of each other amid storm and fog. When the fog cleared, *Peter* sought in vain for *Paul*. The apostles had been separated in the shoreless ocean. Each of them thereafter proceeded independently. Not until July 12 did Bering's party come upon signs of the proximity of land—birds and driftwood. Steller examined both carefully, and declared that they did not belong to Kamchatka. Four days later they saw land.

They had been sailing for some days in fog. Now the atmosphere cleared, and a shore lay ahead of them. As they drew nearer they made out a bay and a rocky coast and a chain of mountains.

This was their saving. Their water supply was nearly exhausted. Signs of scurvy had already made their appearance. One of its first victims was Bering.



particularly from a medicinal point of view"—he heard, as though through a haze—"for— What's the matter, Captain?"

At last he received permission to land. Lieutenant Khitrov got into a big boat, and took on board the water-barrels. Steller was given a small boat, with a sailor to work her. Plainly this was another joke, for as he dropped into the boat someone, amid general laughter, blew a trumpet.

The island off whose shore the *St Peter* had anchored is known today as Kayak Island. On it Khitrov and Steller found some Eskimos' huts, and took from the Eskimos a few of their articles of everyday use in exchange for some knives and glass beads. Steller enthusiastically explored and collected, made notes of his observations, and even made some sketches. Then the wind grew stronger and the surf began to get dangerous; Khitrov stopped drawing water and told Steller they had better get back on board.

"Ten years' preparation," exclaimed Steller, "in order to fetch water from America!"

"If you don't get into the boat immediately, the *St Peter* will sail without us," replied the lieutenant. "Captain's orders!"

"So, Captain's orders are ten hours' stay for exploring an unknown continent!"

The thing that seemed monstrous to the scientist was entirely natural in the eyes of the rest. There was nothing for them to waste time over on that island. They must sail on and try to find a better anchorage and some water!

They sailed northward. The sea was stormy, the coast rocky. On July 20 they sighted a distant snow-capped peak. It towered above the rest of the mountains like the white dome of a cathedral above the roofs of the surrounding houses. This was Saint Elias' day, the day on which all over Russia processions took place in honour of the beloved saint. The peak, the third highest in all North America, was given the saint's name.

On and on they sailed, nowhere finding anchorage. On the barren islands on which they succeeded in landing they found no water, or only brackish water. In the end they were reduced to taking that in, with the result that scurvy grew worse on board. At the beginning of August twenty-eight out of the crew of seventy-seven were ill. On August 29 they reached an island off which they cast anchor. As always, Steller was the first to jump into the boat lowered. Several scurvy patients were taken ashore, Steller hoping to be able to cure them with vegetables. The sailor Shumagin died immediately after landing. The whole group of islands was named after him. Khitrov went in search of water and human beings. He searched for several days. This reduced all the rest to despair. When men begin to rank time above all other things, it is a sign of strained nerves.

September, the time of storms, had come. The nutshell, filled with sick men and men who had lost all hope, drove on, past the south-west point of Alaska, past islands whose semicircular barrier shut off access from the Pacific to the Arctic Ocean, and then past a group of small islands now known as the Andreanov Islands. That was on September 24. Then they saw land no more for forty-two days. They had nothing left, no water, no captain, no strength. Eight or ten men of the crew were still capable of working. One of these was Steller, with his "insufficiently robust" health. He dared not fall ill because he had to cure the others. The regulations must be adhered to!

Through haze and snowstorms the wind carried their ship into the unknown. Almost every day they buried a man at sea. They were in despair; they prayed. One terrible night, November 3-4, Lieutenant Ovzin read from the Psalms to some of the sailors. "So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows." Nevodchikov, a grave and trustworthy sailor, came up to the lieutenant. "Your honour, we must make a vow. If by God's will we are saved, let us all together endow for Saint Peter—an ikon."

\* \* \*

Saint Peter helped them. Once more they sighted land. They decided that it must be Kamchatka. All were eager to land. Bering alone realized that this land was probably not Kamchatka. and that even if it was they must exert their last energies to bring the *St Peter* to Avacha Bay.

But his words no longer carried any weight. For a long time he had no longer been consulted. And, after all, it made no difference to him where he died.

As they approached the coast they lost two anchors. Then the *St Peter* ran on a sandbank. The sailors drew the conclusion that the two unburied dead men they had on board were preventing them from reaching the shore. They tied each of them to a cannon-ball and dropped them into the water.

The weather had cleared a little, and they began unloading. This, on account of the rough sea, was very difficult, and took from the 5th to the 21st of November. In that time they could easily have reached Avacha Bay, and several lives would have been saved.

But they had lost faith in Saint Peter. They got their sick ashore, and built wretched mud huts for them. Now, when almost every man was sick, the absurd pedant Steller became the chief man among them. He was one of the very few who had remained sound in body and soul.

He got even the captain ashore. Bering was infinitely weak.

His legs were swollen, his rigid, ice-cold body scarcely showed any sign of life; yet he was fully conscious when he was carried on to the island on November 8.

Now all his doubts were silenced. He knew he had not much longer to live, and there were no longer any questions that mattered. When he was conscious his thoughts dwelt on his wife and his two sons. What would become of them? When a man has come to grief he is generally remembered more or less kindly—perhaps they would be given a pension? . . . The crew would not have much chance of getting away from here . . . well, who could say?

He thought their situation was hopeless, but he did not say so to them. On December 8 he died.

They buried him, writes Steller, "with the Protestant rites, near our dwelling, where he lies with his adjutants, a commissario, and two grenadiers."

In the course of the winter the survivors discovered that the wind had blown them not on to the mainland but on to an uninhabited island. It is now called Bering Island. They were able to pass the winter there, though some of them were near to madness and some temporarily lost their sight through the blaze of the sunlit snow. They were preserved from starvation by Steller's "fauna." "In the first place"—as he puts it—the fauna interested him, and then it made him immortal through his description of it.

The whole sea-coast was thronged with sea-otters. The men all knew very well how precious were the otter-skins. They ate the flesh and carefully stored the skins. In the course of the winter they collected in all nine hundred. They also hunted sea-lions (*Eumetopias Stelleri*), and also a wonderful animal which Steller discovered and described, and which proudly bore the name "Steller's sea-cow," until it was completely exterminated. This happened very soon, for the "cow" would swim into the forest of seaweed near the shore to browse on it, and the hunters found its flesh, its splendid "bacon," irresistible. Today it browses, under the name *Rhytina Stelleri*, only in the text-books of natural history.

But the true lords of this uninhabited island were the foxes. Of these, too, Steller has interesting things to tell: "The foxes pushed into our dwellings both by day and by night, and stole everything they could carry away, even things that were of no use at all to them, such as knives, sticks, sacks, shoes, stockings, and so on. If we skinned an animal, it often happened that in the process we stabbed two to three foxes with our knives, because they tried to tear the flesh out of our hands. . . . If we stored anything on top of a post in the open air, they undermined the

post and brought it down, or one of them climbed it like an ape and threw down the stored material, with incredible skill and cunning. At night, if we slept in the open, they pulled away our nightcaps and the gloves from under our heads, and our beaver blankets and the skins from under our bodies. When we lay down to go to sleep, they sniffed at our noses to see whether we were dead or alive. If we held our breath, they would actually pluck at our noses and next would have bitten them. One night a sailor was kneeling at the door of his hut to make water; a fox snapped at the exposed part and would not let it go in spite of the man's screams. No one could relieve himself without keeping a stick in his hand."

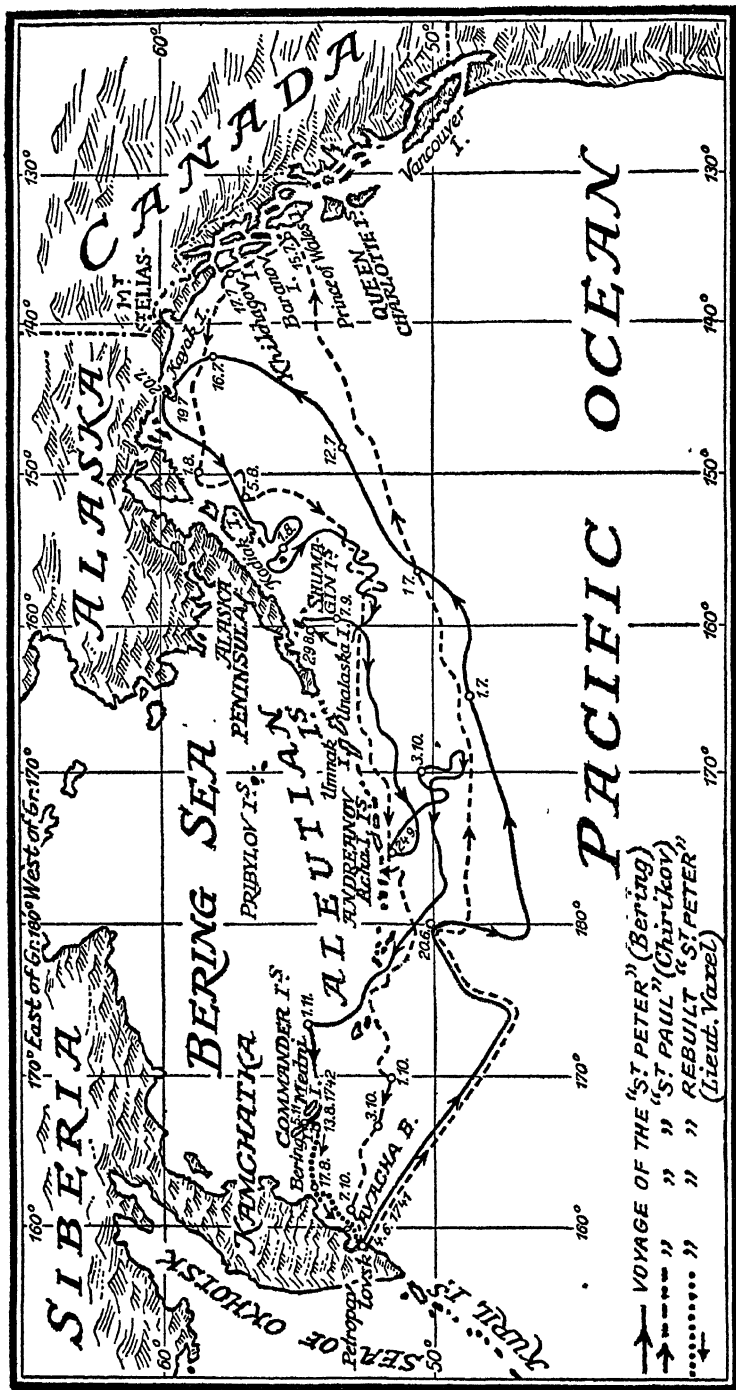
The *St Peter* had so embedded herself in the sandbank into which she had run that there was no possibility of getting her free. The crew therefore pulled her to pieces and built a new ship. This took the whole summer. On August 13, 1742, they took furs and provisions on board and sailed on a westward course. Four days later they sighted the coast of Kamchatka.

Before sailing they had planted a wooden cross on Bering's grave. It was to serve also as a sign of Russian sovereignty.

Of the seventy-six members of the great expedition, forty-six came back to Kamchatka. But many of these died soon after landing. Apparently Steller, with his "insufficiently robust" constitution, was the only one who returned home in perfect health. He had not suffered from scurvy. After all he had gone through he still had the energy to occupy himself with exploration in Kamchatka. He went on foot from Bolsheryetsk to Verkhne-Kamchatsk, and, in order to study the life and the feeding habits of the Kamchadals, he fed like them on the journey, on fishes and plants.

His scientific gallantry was boundless. He—but no, Gmelin is right: of Steller, as of his cow, it is only possible to talk fittingly in Latin—"Steller erat homo nullius laboris tædium et molestias fugiens." No labours wearied him; no troubles daunted him.

It was a pity that his "cheerful character" entirely deserted him toward the end. He quarrelled with everybody, even with his German colleagues, Gmelin and Müller. Everywhere he saw indiscipline and demanded its ending. He submitted to the Senate projects for administrative reform, and to the Holy Synod directives for the conversion of the Kamchadals to Christianity. In St Petersburg his effusions probably went unread, but in Kamchatka he carried out some of his plans. In his capacity of Adjunct for Natural History and Doctor of Medicine he appointed a certain Ivan Popov to be schoolmaster at Bolsheryetsk, to teach the children reading and writing. But he treated the grown-ups badly: he exasperated them, and they denounced him. His



BERING'S AND CHIRIKOV'S GREAT EXPEDITION

explanations were accepted by the authorities at Irkutsk, and he continued on his way to St Petersburg. But St Petersburg knew nothing of this, and when he had actually proceeded beyond the Urals he was ordered back to Irkutsk. "Tum demum molestias fugit" ("then, indeed, he fled from troubles"): he died, in 1746, in the town of Tyumen. Of his thirty-seven years he had devoted the nine best to Bering's great expedition.

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But where, all this time, was the *St Paul*? She had been driving on the waves at no great distance from the *St Peter*. After losing sight of his sister-ship, Chirikov, too, had steered southwards at first. There were Gama Land and Terra de Jéso to discover—on that point the cheerful sceptic Delisle was insistent. The whole expedition, indeed, was based on a map on which the other Delisle had entered those two islands. It was a family affair.

On the very next day, however, Chirikov turned eastwards, and soon he discovered the first signs of land. On July 15, 1741, twenty-six days after the separation from Bering, the *St Paul* came to a couple of little islands lying ahead of Prince of Wales Island. The boat sent to explore the coast returned with the report that there was nowhere that the ship could lie alongside, and the *St Paul* then sailed northward for two days. She anchored off the island now called Khikhagov Island. On the 17th Dementyev, the boatswain, rowed away with ten armed sailors to conquer America.

There was evidence of habitation—smoke rising over the coast. Chirikov waited a long time for Dementyev to return; when no news of him had come for six days another boat was sent out with three men under Savelyev. This boat, too, did not return. What happened to the two parties has never been learnt.

Chirikov had lost not only fifteen good sailors but his means of landing: he had no boat left. There was nothing he could do but return to Kamchatka, particularly since Delisle was now convinced that Gama Land was undiscoverable. Chirikov accordingly turned back. He sailed along the coast of Alaska and then past the Aleutians, on much the same course that Bering had been following a few days before him. He came close to Kayak Island, where Bering, too, had been, and an Aleutian came on board; they exchanged presents. But he was nowhere able to find water or provisions. The consequence, as always, was scurvy. When the *St Paul* ran into the harbour of Avacha on October 8, her crew had diminished by twenty-one. Here, in harbour, before he could land, Delisle died.

Chirikov was brought ashore seriously ill. But this conscientious navigator felt that he had not yet done his duty. He



was of the opinion that instructions were meant to be carried out, and so long as there remained any life in a man there was more that could be done toward carrying them out. When spring came he had recovered sufficiently to stand up, though precariously. And so he set sail again, in order to try to find Bering. He sailed to the Aleutians and reached Acha; that is to say, he sailed from Kamchatka far beyond Bering's burial-place. Moreover, he passed close to Bering Island. Bad weather forced him to turn back.

From Petropavlovsk he sailed to Okhotsk, and from there he went to St Petersburg. He was gravely ill. He made no complaint, but was suffering from a cough. His services were recognized, and he was presented to the Tsaritsa Elizabeth Petrovna. She informed him of his promotion to the rank of Captain-Commander. As he bowed to kiss the Tsaritsa's hand he was seized with a fit of coughing. He was deeply embarrassed, especially as there were flecks of blood on his handkerchief. Soon afterwards he followed his companions—Captain Bering, Dr Steller, and the intrepid astronomer Delisle—to the grave.

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But this was far from being the end of the work undertaken by Bering. The Russian Admiralty took up his plan and extended it. The whole Arctic coast from the White Sea to Kamchatka should be explored. All questions should be settled. Was it possible to go by sea from Europe to China? Was Siberia joined to America? The admirals needed maps, exact maps of the coasts, of the Kuril Islands, of Japan, of the Amur estuary.

Several expeditions were prepared. All were set time-limits. When, however, it was reported that the time allowed for carrying out the duties assigned was absolutely insufficient, extensions were granted. The Admiralty was ready to "approve" every reasonable request. It never refused necessary funds. When it was informed that it was impossible to sail along the coast, it replied: "Travel, then, along the coast by land, with reindeer or dogs." How Peter the Great had inspired these men with his genius, his determination, and his boundless thirst for knowledge!

In 1734 two officers, Muravyev and Pavlov, had tried to reach the Ob estuary from Archangel via the Ugrian Straits. They did not succeed; the attempt was made again by Lieutenant Malygin. In 1737 Malygin had entered the Ob estuary and sailed up the river to Beryosov. In 1734 Lieutenant Dmitri Ovzin had set sail from the Ob estuary for the Yenisei estuary. He, too, failed at the first attempt; in 1737 he succeeded and sailed up the Yenisei.

For his friendship with the son of the "political criminal" Prince Dolgorukov, Ovzin had been degraded to Able Seaman and banished to Kamchatka. There, in 1740, he was appointed

junior officer of the *St Peter* by Bering. Ovzin later—in fulfilment of the vow on board—hung an ikon of Saint Peter, framed in silver, in the old church of Petropavlovsk.

Lieutenant Minin had tried three times to sail from the west round the Taimyr peninsula. He failed every time. Then Lieutenant Pronchishchev had made the attempt from the east, from the Lena estuary. He was accompanied on the voyage by his wife, the first woman in the history of Polar exploration. Twice the couple tried to get round the Taimyr, but pack-ice blocked their way. In 1736 both died from scurvy. Pronchishchev's companion, Lieutenant Chelyuskin, returned with the remainder of the crew to Yakutsk.

In 1739 Chelyuskin and a brother officer, Khariton Laptyev, had resumed the assault on Taimyr. Their ship was crushed by ice, and they went on in 1740 in dog-sleighs across the tundra. After twice wintering on the way, in May 1742 Chelyuskin reached the northernmost point on the continents of the earth. It is called Cape Chelyuskin.

Yet another task remained to be attempted—the exploration of the coast from the Lena estuary to the Anadyr, round the north-east corner of Asia. In 1735 Lieutenant Lasinius had set sail from the Lena estuary with a crew of fifty-one. Forty-two, including Lasinius, did not return. Dmitri Laptyev, a cousin of Khariton, set out in their place. His first attempt failed. Three years later he left the Lena estuary a second time; he spent two successive winters in the ice, but he failed to pass through the Bering Straits. Not succeeding by Deshnev's sea route, he decided to go by land along Stadukhin's route. This cost him another winter.

He did not die of scurvy; he did not lose his sight in the Polar sun's glare; he did not even catch rheumatism. After twenty years' service in the navy he retired in good health, with the rank of Vice-Admiral.

The old captain who had supplied the stimulus for all these expeditions had long been asleep on his lonely island. He had not reached admiral's rank like some of his lieutenants. He had only been promoted to Captain-Commander. That is why Bering Island and its neighbour Copper Island are also called the Commander Islands. Bering's last hope was not in vain. His family were awarded a sufficient pension, and in addition they received a lump sum of five thousand roubles. His balance of full pay was paid in full to his widow.

He sleeps soundly, disturbed by no more doubts. He sleeps like a king—on his own island, in his own sea, with two oceans as guards of honour. The spirit of Prince Hamlet and of Doctor Faust, the spirit of eternal doubt and of undying thirst for knowledge, floats above the islands of the old Commander.

## THE RISING IN KAMCHATKA

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MANY bold men came to their end in Kamchatka, and the peninsula saw many crimes and many deeds of heroism. But it lay so remote from all civilization that until the middle of the eighteenth century nobody knew anything about it. The world did not hear at once of the deeds of Bering and Chirikov. Another had to come to make the world talk of Kamchatka.

In 1768 some of the Polish nobles rebelled against their "rightful" King, Stanislas Poniatovsky. The King sat on his throne by the grace of the Russian Empress Catherine II. The rebellion against him thus implied war with Russia.

Very soon after the opening of hostilities a young Polish general, Count Moritz August Benyovsky, was taken prisoner by the Russians. He had been found, with two wounds, under his horse, which had been shot dead. The Russian General Apraxin released him on parole: the captive general promised not to fight again against the Russians.

A year later he was again taken prisoner in an engagement, by the Russian Colonel Brynkin. The colonel knew that this was the conspirator whom Apraxin had set free. Benyovsky was not likely to remain unobserved among the Polish officers. He had already been for a long time one of the outstanding personalities not only in the Polish but in the Russian army.

In the twenty-eight years of his life Benyovsky had had all sorts of experiences. He had passed his childhood on his parents' estate, in the society of Hungarian magnates. Of his Polish relatives one, an uncle, was a landowner and "starost" (local administrator) in Lithuania; his father, a Hungarian count, was a cavalry general under the Dual Monarchy.

During the Seven Years War Benyovsky had served as a lieutenant in the Austrian army. He had entered the army at fifteen; he was at the battles of Lobositz, Prague, and Schweidnitz. At this last battle he had been wounded in the leg, and he was lame for the rest of his life.

Suddenly, in the middle of the war, he resigned from the army and went to Lithuania. His uncle had summoned him to share his forest solitude, promising to make him heir to his whole estate.

Benyovsky went to Lithuania, but did not stay there long. His father had died in Hungary, and his stepbrothers had hastened to secure the sole right of inheritance. When the lieutenant

learned this, he jumped on his horse and raced home. On the way he primed his pistols and sharpened his sword. He summoned his vassals and hurled himself like a tornado upon his estate. The stepbrothers fled to Vienna.

He thus acquired his right by main force. But only for a short time. In the realm of the maternal Maria Theresia the articles of the law were stronger than the sword. He was declared a rebel by the Vienna courts. The stepbrothers returned to their estate clothed in legal authorization; the sword in its precious scabbard crossed the frontier with its master.

He turned to the west, to Danzig, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Plymouth—cities from which ships sailed afar. He saw the wind fill their sails and the ships disappear presently below the horizon. He strolled about the quays, entered the harbour taverns, made the acquaintance of captains. Grey-haired seamen clapped him on the shoulder; tongues were loosed by bottles of rum. In the glint of the bottle palms swayed, apes chattered, and black-skinned savages stretched their bows. The captains explained their ships' equipment and showed him the compass and the sextant. Why should not the count try his luck in the East Indies?

It was at this stage that the Confederates had invited him to join them. He met the conspirators at Warsaw, and the Austrian lieutenant became a Polish major. Before the fighting began he tried once more to secure his rights at Vienna. But the articles of the law were still in force there. On his way to Poland he fell ill, and found shelter in the manor house of a magnate, Count Hensky. The young major was tended by the count's daughter. He recovered, and they married.

The second time he was taken prisoner, Benyovsky already had the rank of a general. Covered with wounds, he appeared before Colonel Brynkin. Brynkin was himself an admirer of the "lame general." He did not have Benyovsky shot, though he would have been fully entitled to do so. But he could not accord Benyovsky the honours of his rank after he had already broken his parole once. Benyovsky was transported to Russia with a batch of common prisoners. The journey was not comfortable and the treatment not at all gentle.

He was taken to the city of Kazan. There he made the acquaintance of another captive Confederate, the Swedish Major Windbladt; the two became friends. By some means or other Benyovsky procured false passports for Windbladt and himself; the two left Kazan and set out for St Petersburg.

Windbladt had learnt that a Swedish ship lay at anchor on the Neva and was due to sail in two or three days. The sailors promised to take him and his friend on board. Next day the two appeared on the quay at the appointed hour—and were arrested.

Benyovsky was sent to Kamchatka. His companions on the journey were political criminals sentenced on grave charges. Apart from Windbladt, they were all Russians; all were men of culture and bearers of distinguished names. First Lieutenant Panov, of the Guards, and Captain Stepanov belonged to the group of Conservative nobles who had resisted the progressive ideas of Catherine II. They had criticized not only her ideas but the Empress herself; her manner of living offered plenty of scope for comment. The unwanted critics were exiled to Kamchatka. Major Baturin, of the Artillery, was exiled because he had tried to hatch a conspiracy to dethrone Catherine and set her nephew, Grand Duke Peter Fyodorovich, on the throne in her place. Ssolmanov, secretary to the Senate, had taken its statutes, in which Peter the Great had written that "The Senate is the supreme guardian of the law," much too literally. The secretary had got more and more into the habit of quoting those words, until the Senators arranged for this tiresome pedant's transfer to Kamchatka.

The whole company were taken across the Urals in December 1769.

At Tobolsk their chains were removed. At that time the famous Chicherin was Governor there—"Little Father Denis," as he was called in Siberia. He was one of Catherine's high officials, a headstrong man but not a bad fellow. Not only did he remove the prisoners' chains on the day of their arrival, but he gave them permission to move freely about Tobolsk and received them as guests in the Governor's palace.

After a fortnight's rest they travelled on by sleigh. Seven months' journey brought them to Yakutsk.

Yakutsk was the capital of eastern Siberia, the seat of the Governor, the centre of the fur trade, and the centre also for the distribution of exiles. Cossacks in garrison, hunters, Russian fur dealers, Yakuts, Tunguses, Mongols, Chinese smugglers, Greek speculators lured thither from who knows where, mingled with exiles of all nationalities and languages and ranks—murderers with slit nostrils, thieves with branded cheeks, former aristocrats from St Petersburg, Confederates—Poles, Hungarians, Frenchmen, Swedes.

Over all ruled the omnipotent Governor, a brutal, cruel man by Benyovsky's account. The "brutal man" began by granting to all the newly arrived political exiles the right to go anywhere in the city on parole, and to occupy themselves in any way they liked.

Benyovsky was out to regain his freedom. The idea of flight was suggested to him by a German physician named Hoffmann, whom he met in Yakutsk. Hoffmann was in the Russian Government's service and had been sent to Kamchatka on duty. This was not at all to his taste.

"They take us from here to Okhotsk," he explained to Benyovsky; "from there they go now by sea to Kamchatka. Where the sea is, there is the road to the wide world. We could buy a little ship, or get hold of one somehow or other—any old launch would do."

Hoffmann's eyes grew dreamy. Then he struck the table with his fist and exclaimed:

"If only we had a captain!"

Benyovsky's eyes grew cold and hard. Schemes revolved in his head like flakes in a snowstorm.

"I know a captain," he said, seeming to look through Hoffmann into the vague distance.

"Whom?"

"Me."

Benyovsky disclosed his plan of flight to his comrades; they elected him as their leader and swore absolute obedience to him.

After a few days the whole company travelled on in reindeer-sleighs. It was a hard journey, but at last they saw the sea.

The commandant of Okhotsk lost no time in shipping Benyovsky and his company on board the packet-boat *Peter and Paul* as soon as she was ready to sail. The vessel had seen much of the world. She sailed to the American coast for furs and walrus ivory. The eight cannon on board showed that the hunt was not always confined to animals.

With a cargo of flour and vodka and six prisoners the ship set sail. It was toward the end of November. Ten days later she lay in the estuary of the Bolshoi. Higher up was Bolsheryetsk, then the capital of Kamchatka.

Bolsheryetsk called itself a town, but it was no more than a little settlement with a modest wooden church, the commandant's little house, and a barracks that was just a big barn. Next to the barracks were a few sheds, and beyond them a few dozen scattered huts. This was not only the capital of Kamchatka but a "fortress." The fortifications were nothing more than an old moat, into which the inhabitants threw all sorts of garbage. The garrison consisted of seventy Cossacks with their families. Three-quarters of the Cossacks were usually absent—they maintained connexion between the "capital" and the other "towns," went hunting, and collected the fur tribute from the Kamchadals.

At last the ship entered the harbour and dropped anchor. Numbers of "baidarkas" clustered round her—little boats made of a framework covered with otter hides. In one of them stood an old officer. He greeted the weather-beaten captain. "What have you brought?" he asked.

"Flour and vodka, Commandant, and also six exiles." The

captain pointed to his living freight, standing in a row along the gunwale.

The commandant turned to the exiles. His eyes fell on Benyovsky, who stood quietly watching as always. "Who are you?" he asked.

"Soldier, former general, now slave!"

An unusual answer, from an unusual man. The commandant had noticed him at once. Benyovsky was a striking figure anywhere.

The prisoners were taken into the town. They were told what their life here would be. They were surrounded by men clothed in fantastic garments of fur and worn canvas—fellow-exiles. These men gave the new arrivals a friendly welcome. Some offered them hospitality for the first few days.

On that first evening Benyovsky and Windbladt sat in the hut of their host, Captain Khrushchev, of the Guards. When Peter III was strangled at St Petersburg by officers of the Guards and Catherine was placed by them in triumph on the throne, Khrushchev had been true to his oath. For this he and three of his comrades were condemned to death. At the last moment they were informed that the Empress had reprieved them and that the death-sentence had been commuted into one of banishment for life.

In 1762 they were taken to Okhotsk. Not long before Benyovsky's arrival they had been brought in the hold of *Peter and Paul* to Kamchatka. Of the eternity the Empress had graciously granted them, they had already had eight years.

A decree of Peter the Great forbade exiles to have property of any sort, but Khrushchev lived little worse than the other inhabitants of Bolsheryetsk. He had food and drink to spare for his guests. Eight thousand miles from St Petersburg, in a desolate place on the banks of the Bolshoi, on the table of a banished "criminal," lay Russian, French, German, and English books.

The new friends sat up till morning discussing the chances of escape. By the light of a little lamp filled with stinking seal blubber they sat bent over the maps in Lord Anson's *Voyage Round the World*.

Lord Anson had started with five ships from St Helena in 1740 on an expedition "to safeguard British marine commerce from the attacks of Spanish corsairs." One of his ships was wrecked in a storm off Cape Horn. Two others turned back, and he did not see them again. With the two remaining ships he reached the island of Juan Fernandez. He had been able to save some of the crew of the wrecked ship. On leaving St Helena these three ships had had a total complement of 961; a count now showed that in a few months he had lost 626 men. Many had

succumbed to sickness. There seemed nothing more to be done than to turn back and make as quickly as possible for home. The expedition had plainly failed.

Yet Anson pressed on. He fell on Spanish ports, destroyed them, and burnt them down. From the coast of Chile he plunged into Chinese waters. His second ship went to pieces; he burned it. When he reached Macao he had hardly any crew left. He recruited all the riff-raff he could get hold of—negroes, mestizos, Chinese, Malays—until he had in all a crew of 227. With this assortment he captured a huge Spanish galleon with a crew of 600. Such are the men who command the ocean!

That night Benyovsky and Khrushchev swore to devote their last energies to carrying out the German physician's plan.

\* \* \*

The exiles were united by their common fate and their common sufferings. The news of the conspiracy was whispered from one to another. Some of the inhabitants of Bolsheryetsk joined in. There was no need to offer any explanation of the desire to get away from Kamchatka; to have lived there at all was reason enough.

Among the conspirators were officers of the Guards, a Senator, a priest, representatives, apparently, of all classes and all professions of the time. Out of pure love of adventure they were joined by young Ismailov, the only one among them who had not the slightest reason for flight. He was a Siberian, completely untroubled by the climate of Kamchatka, fond of fish, and with no great objection to the odour of the Kamchadaleses.

Benyovsky, who not long before had sat with Marshal Czarnetsky, Count Potoczky, and Prince Lyubomirsky in the Confederates' council of war, was able, no doubt, to enter Captain Nilov's office without any particular embarrassment. For the all-powerful "Governor" of Kamchatka was, after all, only a plain regimental captain who had been appointed commandant. (His superior officer, the nearest governor, was three thousand miles away at Yakutsk.) And he was not "de" Nilov, as Benyovsky calls him in his memoirs; nothing is known of any aristocratic origin of the captain's.

When Nilov learned that the count knew German, French, and Latin, it seemed to him to be a good idea to make him tutor to his children. On that very day Benyovsky was presented to Madame Nilov. She was a woman of fine build, with energetic movements and an intimidating smile. The volume of her bosom gave the impression that she had caught a seal and stuck it in her corset. She was the daughter of a Swedish prisoner and a Russian mother; she could speak German, and she was full of compassion for the exiles.



It was important to be on good terms not only with the commandant but with his immediate subordinates. There were two of them. Benyovsky calls them "Chancellor" and "Hetman." These offices existed neither in Kamchatka nor in any other Russian province. One of the men was simply chief clerk; the other was in command of the seventy Cossacks.

When Benyovsky called on the "Chancellor" he found him playing chess. His position was hopeless. His opponent, the "Hetman," had an advantage of a rook, a knight, and two pawns. Benyovsky looked at the board.

"Not much of a position," he said; "but it is not hopeless."

"I can't see anything to do," confessed the "Chancellor."

"That's just what chess is," said Benyovsky, smiling a little patronizingly. "One can see it, another can't."

The "Chancellor" invited Benyovsky to show how he would get out of the tight corner. After a couple of moves Benyovsky checked the king and at the same time threatened the queen, winning the game. His opponent was evidently not a world master.

Chess was played for money in Kamchatka. The merchants would stake three, four, and five hundred roubles on a game. His chess-playing gained Benyovsky friends and money and consequently vodka. The last two were essentials for the success of any conspiracy in Kamchatka.

More important even than either of these was love. Mademoiselle Nilov had seen sixteen springs. She had soft grey Russian eyes, a slender figure, and firm round shoulders. Like her mother, she moved quickly and vigorously, and when she stood up she seemed to be going to fly.

A tacit understanding was reached at once between Benyovsky and her young brother. The snub-nosed boy with the unruly head of hair did not spoil things for his tutor, and the tutor in return left him in peace. He stumbled somehow through his lesson, was given a new one to prepare, and disappeared, leaving on the table the marks of his penknife and of an upset inkpot.

The tutor went on with the lesson with his other pupil. Sometimes he would rise from his seat and walk up and down the room. He would come up to Anastasia to see whether she was writing her French words correctly. He saw the slender, still half-childish hand diligently pushing the unaccustomed pen, he saw the little chestnut-brown locks on her neck and the line of her throat, which continued down until it was lost beneath the soft bodice. Good God! he thought, this in Kamchatka! And all in the end for some dull Cossack!

One day when Benyovsky came for the lesson he was told that the demoiselle was not well. Madame Nilov permitted him to

enter Anastasia's little room. The girl lay in her pure white bed. Benyovsky sat next to it. She gave him her hand; he did not release it. A few minutes later her mother came in. In those few minutes Anastasia had spoken only three words to her tutor. But they were the three most fateful words in a maiden's life. She had said, "I love you!"

Benyovsky's Russian helpers knew all about organizing a revolt. They told all Bolsheryetsk that the count was an innocent sufferer in the cause of the rightful ruler of Russia, Paul Petrovich. It was believed all over Russia, and was not far from the truth, that the Imperial Guards had killed Peter III and raised Catherine to the throne "for a glass of vodka," excluding the heir to the throne, Paul, from all business of State.

Benyovsky had shown to one and another a green velvet envelope closed with a highly elaborate seal. Nobody could decipher the seal, and everybody believed, therefore, that it was the Tsar's. In the envelope, he said, was a letter from Paul to the Empress Maria Theresia, asking for the hand of her most Christian daughter; Count Benyovsky had been dispatched as courier with this letter. On the way he had been arrested and banished. But he had faithfully preserved the letter, and one day he would deliver it.

It is impossible in a little village for a conspiracy to pass wholly unnoticed. More than once Captain Nilov was warned. The first to visit him was the shipowner Chulochnikov, with whose crews Benyovsky was negotiating. When a woman and her daughter are involved in an affair, no commandant in the world can preserve clear judgment. Nilov threw out Chulochnikov with ignominy.

Others, too, came to warn the commandant. A merchant, Kazarinov, called on him. But Benyovsky, in Nilov's presence, gave the "slanderer" such a dressing-down that the visitor was reduced to apologizing to him.

The count soon had a suspicion of the source from which Kazarinov had got wind of the conspiracy. On the following night he assembled the executive committee at Khrushchev's house—Benyovsky, Windblatt, Khrushchev, Baturin, and Panov. The gloomy, taciturn Panov was an inestimable member—he forgot and forgave nothing.

The traitor was summoned to the meeting. When he saw that he had been found out, he confessed everything. He was led out into the black of Kamchatka, across deep snowdrifts to the isolated huts of the exiles, and there he was shot. The falling snow removed all trace of him until the spring.

Yet another came to warn Nilov—Ivashkin, ex-officer of the Guards. As a young man of twenty-three he had been banished by Empress Elizabeth with two comrades with whom he had

indulged in *lèse-majesté* over their drinks. The Empress Elizabeth was the most humane of all the women rulers of Russia. Under her rule the death-penalty was abolished. Ivashkin received only a dose of the knout; one of his comrades had his nostrils slit, and the other had his tongue cut out. Then the three were transported to Kamchatka. At the time of Benyovsky's arrival Ivashkin had been twenty-eight years in exile.

He was the only man who placed no faith in the green velvet envelope and the Empress Maria Theresia. He felt no malice against his oppressors. All his dreams had long ago faded and all his wrongs had ceased to smart. Such exiles of Elizabeth's time were often pardoned under Catherine. But Ivashkin had been forgotten.

He went to Nilov and reported to him what he knew. But he had scarcely left the room when Nilov forgot him.

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Benyovsky continued to prosper. Already there was open talk of his engagement to the daughter of the commandant.

Never before had Bolsheryetsk known so splendid a season. Ball followed ball. First at the "Chancellor's," then at the "Hetman's," and so on. All the "burghers" of Bolsheryetsk brought presents to the betrothed of the commandant's little daughter; already he went about in a beaver fur and a sable cap. A little house was built for him, and a grand sleigh presented to him.

Last of all came the ball at the commandant's own house. The whole house was made ready for the festival. In the chief room the table was laid for fifty guests. The meal lasted from two to five; it is difficult to say whether it was lunch or dinner, for at two it was already dark. Outside there was dense fog; within, tallow candles shed a gentle, cosy light.

After the meal the guests went into the "salon." The room was decorated with Chinese silks and precious furs. On the walls hung curved Cossack sabres and long Samurai swords.

It was strange in these wonderful surroundings to see a slender young girl in a white ball-dress, a girl with long legs, round shoulders, and a firmly drawn parting on the top of her head. She seemed as exotic as the little spinet that through some miracle had strayed into this region; it stood now on a white bearskin. Madame Nilov adjusted the lace on her immense bosom, and let her plump round hands fall on the keys. Next to her stood Anastasia. Gentle melodies floated through the room, and no one better appreciated their charm than Benyovsky:

Love hath his net  
Of gossamer wrought  
Lovers like children  
Love to be caught.

Peace and contentment reigned in the Nilov family. All were happy—the commandant, whom his spouse no longer continually reproached for his inclination to the bottle, and Madame Nilov, who was busy with her daughter's trousseau, and the shock-haired boy, who cut up tables and had completely forgotten all about adding and subtracting. For Anastasia, life had become a glorious dream.

The moment she woke in the morning her delightful dream embraced her, and not until evening when she went to sleep did it tear itself from her embrace till next morning. She would gladly have let the dream go on without ever ceasing. She gossiped with her young maid.

"Tell me, Masha, have you ever been in love?"

Masha blushed, glanced at her mistress, and laughed.

"No," she confessed. "I haven't been, I am."

"Who with? Who with? Oh, I know! The Cossack, the hunter who gave you the fox fur. A good-looking boy, and I'm sure he's a good one and faithful!"

Masha's eyes sparkled. Then they grew sad; she covered her face with her apron and began to cry.

"Masha, Masha, what's the matter?" And Anastasia put her arms round her little friend. Masha sobbed, powdered her nose, and said:

"It's because he has a dreadful idea. He wants to run away with your count. He wants to run away in a ship, for ever. I must come too, he says; but how can I do such a thing, how could I possibly?"

It was hard for Anastasia to have to wait till morning to send for Benyovsky. He realized at once that the secret was out. He talked long and earnestly to her. "I have told you," he said, "of my past life; I have kept nothing from you; do you really think I could be content with the sort of life we have here? Do you really think I could betray you—you? I want my freedom only in order to make you not the wife of a miserable exile but the consort of a count and general, who will take you to his father's mansion and give you a new home and honours and wealth! Anastasia, will you follow me, will you help me?"

She gave him no answer. She bent her head down to his lap, took his small firm hand, and pressed it to her lips.

At this time all sorts of curious things were happening at Bolsheryetsk. Benyovsky appeared before Nilov at the head of a delegation representing the exiles, and solemnly asked permission to found an agricultural colony at the southernmost extremity of Kamchatka, Cape Lopatka. He made a regular speech, concluding with the request for permission to call the colony "Nilovka," in honour of the supremely noble and humanitarian commandant.

Needless to say, Nilov granted permission and promised his support to the enterprise. He asked Benyovsky to compile a brief summary of his speech, so that a report might be sent to St Petersburg on the new colonization project.

Nilov did not entertain the slightest suspicion, and listened to no one. His wife and daughter saw to that. He refused to listen even to his right-hand man, the "Hetman," when the latter spoke up at the end of April and urgently advised that immediate steps should be taken. Once more Nilov made up his mind to send for Benyovsky, so that the scandalous gossip should be dissipated by the count's lofty smile and persuasive assurances.

But Benyovsky had learnt from Anastasia of that grave intervention, and he saw that the moment had come for action. He distributed arms among the conspirators and divided them into three groups. At the head of one group was Windbladt, at the head of the second Khrushchev, and he himself commanded the third.

A sergeant came to him from Nilov with the request that he would go to see the commandant. Benyovsky affected to be ill. The sergeant was followed by the "Hetman," who received the same reply. The "Hetman" tried to intimidate Benyovsky:

"Off you go, Count! If you don't come voluntarily I shall order my Cossacks to find your legs for you!"

His escort of two men proceeded to carry out his threat. But Benyovsky was not alone. A dozen of the conspirators rushed in, and in a moment the three unbidden guests were bound.

Next day, at 11 a.m., the commandant sent a messenger to Benyovsky to tell him that he was convinced of his innocence and wanted him to come to see him to clear up the misunderstanding. Half an hour later a letter came from Anastasia: "Father is just as much your friend as ever," she wrote; "come and clear everything up."

The letter had been dictated—that was shown by the three red threads in the envelope. This was a danger-sign the two had agreed on—a red symbol of the blood Anastasia herself was calling down upon her house.

After the midday meal a corporal and four Cossacks appeared; Benyovsky talked to them through the door. The conversation went on for some time, until the corporal was thoroughly chilled. Benyovsky offered him a glass of vodka. That is an invitation that no one declines in Kamchatka. The corporal entered, but instead of the glass of spirit he saw four pistol barrels pointed at him. He let himself be bound and taken to join the "Hetman" in the cellar. The four Cossacks were secured, one after the other, by the same trick. As the conspirators had a sense of humour, they gave each of their new captives the promised glass of vodka.

While Nilov was waiting for the return of his corporal, Benyovsky ordered his three detachments, whom he magniloquently addressed as "Divisions," to go over to the attack.

Nilov's guard, stationed in his house, consisted of eight men. Five of them were in Benyovsky's cellar. The other three were fast asleep, as by now it was night-time. When Benyovsky's "division" knocked on the door, there was no rousing them. Finally the shock-head heard the noise. He ran to his father, but before Nilov realized what was up the "division" had broken into the house. Stairs and passages were filled with wild shouting.

Benyovsky hurried to Nilov's office. "Save your life!" he shouted to the commandant.

"Not before I have taken yours, you villain, you traitor!" replied the captain, firing at Benyovsky. The shot only grazed him.

At the sound of the shot the conspirators rushed in.

"Give in," shouted Benyovsky; "go to your wife."

"Oh you wretch!" growled the captain, throwing himself upon Benyovsky, seizing him by the throat, and bringing him to the ground.

But at Benyovsky's side stood Panov. His sword came down on Nilov. From some quarter came a shot, and with his skull smashed the commandant collapsed.

The body was dragged into the anteroom and left lying there.

Meanwhile the three Cossacks still in the house had rushed out to try to organize resistance. They failed. The bulk of the garrison, as usual, were on patrol. A couple of dozen Cossacks withdrew beyond the moat.

The men driven beyond the moat represented no serious menace. Benyovsky states that the Cossacks were a thousand strong. Such a force never existed, either then or at any time, in all Kamchatka.

For all that, the conspirators could not be entirely at ease so long as the Cossacks were at large beyond the moat. They must be forced to yield. Benyovsky went to work as only he could. He ordered Panov to drive all the women and children into the church and to heap wood and straw round it; then he sent word to the Cossacks that the church would be set on fire if they did not come and lay down their arms.

The Cossacks hesitated; Benyovsky lit two huge piles of wood alongside the church. This was too much for the nerves even of the Cossacks of Kamchatka. They hoisted the white flag and came back.

Next day Nilov was solemnly buried. All the inhabitants attended the mass for the dead; then he was buried with military honours by the side of the church. Nobody in Bolsheryetsk had a bad word to say of the poor captain.

Those who had given warnings to Nilov were savagely punished. The "Chancellor" was murdered and the rest knouted.

"But where is Ivashkin?" asked Panov. "He ought to be hanged, or at least well whipped."

Benyovsky agreed entirely, but immediately afterwards he forgot Ivashkin.

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April drew to its end. The conspirators began to load their ship, the *St Peter*; provisions, arms, and furs were taken on board. The State treasury was not forgotten. At the beginning of May the harbour was free of ice. The last members of the expedition came alongside in boats. Ninety-six persons sailed away, including eight women. Masha and her Cossack and Anastasia left their native soil for an unknown freedom.

What happened to Madame "de" Nilov we do not know. Neither in Benyovsky's memoirs nor in the official documents is there any mention of the poor lady, the commandant's good-natured, unassuming wife.

On May 12, 1771, the *St Peter* hoisted the flag of the Russian Tsar—not that of the Polish Confederation as Benyovsky asserts—and put out to sea.

Benyovsky maintained strict discipline on board. He was "Commander-in-Chief." Now he was no longer engaged in conspiracies but in defeating those of other people. Some of the fugitives were in agreement that there was nothing to hope for from aimlessly tossing on the high seas. They asked Panov about the green letter; he burst out into such laughter as, apparently, he had never before indulged in in his life. When they asked him where they were going he shrugged his shoulders.

The plot was easily discovered. Stepanov, who had come the whole way through Siberia with Benyovsky, was involved in it. From the moment of their arrival at Bolsheryetsk he had been hopelessly in love with Anastasia, and he had tried more than once to open her eyes. He revealed the plot to her, and for the second time she saved Benyovsky's life.

The conspirators were brought to trial. Three of them were mercilessly flogged, but allowed to remain on board; the other three were also flogged, although one of them was a woman (but only a Kamchadal); then they were marooned on a lonely island. They were given a small supply of flour. One of these three was the young Ismailov, the man who had no great objection to the odour of the Kamchadales. He objected, however, to that of the woman who had been whipped; he wept and begged to be allowed to remain on board. Panov merely shrugged his shoulders.

Stepanov was given a humiliating punishment—he was trans-

ferred to the galley to do the rough and dirty work for the cook. Thanks to Anastasia, his life was preserved and his back left unharmed. She loved Benyovsky alone, but she did not want to send others to their death for him.

A few days later they approached a small Japanese island. The inhabitants tried by shouts and gestures to make them put out to sea again, but without success. When people have been living many days on nothing but stinking fish and foul water they will land even if the whole world's artillery lines the shore.

They sailed farther along the Japanese coast. Large ships they avoided as far as they could; the smaller ones they deprived of their water and provisions, and at times of other things. Now and again they landed.

On the island of Formosa the sea-pilgrims were unfortunate: the advance guard that had been sent on in a boat was met by the inhabitants with a hail of arrows. Three men were killed and three others seriously wounded. Benyovsky was not a man of fine sensibility, but he sincerely regretted the death of one of these comrades of his. He erected a cross with a touching inscription above his grave. No wonder—the poisoned arrow had taken the life of the faithful though taciturn Vassily Panov.

A young conspirator died with him. He had distinguished himself in no way; he was just young and loved Anastasia—but who on board the *St Peter* did not? Perhaps only Benyovsky.

The *St Peter* sailed aimlessly for another five days; then she reached the coast of China, at the Portuguese port of Macao. Here her wanderings at sea came to an end. A malignant fever began to mow down the fugitives. Between Kamchatka and Macao half of them had lost their lives in one way or another. A further four women and twenty men died at Macao.

Did Benyovsky merely include Anastasia as one more of "our women"? He writes: "On September 25 Anastasia died. Her premature death greatly saddened me, especially since it deprived me of the satisfaction of rewarding her devotion and giving her to young Popov as his wife."

That is his last mention of Anastasia. He did not put up a cross in her memory or compose a touching inscription; he had no time for that, as he was busy selling the *St Peter* and the furs she had carried and the spoil collected during her voyage. The myth of the "rightful ruler" was abandoned: Benyovsky declared that he was a Hungarian and a subject of the Austrian Empress, and he said the same of his associates. They objected. On this Benyovsky declared to the Governor that the whole band were preparing a rising in order to capture the city. He alleged that Windbladt had stolen from him! They were all thrown into prison.



Finally they were liberated and put on board a French ship. Benyovsky, Khrushchev, Windblatt, and a few others reached Paris.

France was not on good terms with Russia at that time. Benyovsky was received and fêted everywhere. The representative of the American States, Benjamin Franklin, had long talks with him. Benyovsky told Franklin how the Governor of Kamchatka, a thorough scoundrel, had tortured him, how he had been compelled to work in chains in the coal-mines, and what depravity ruled in Russian society; he told him how the dazzling aristocrat Princess Nilov, the wife of that bloodthirsty potentate, had offered him her own daughter as mistress, and with what scorn he had rejected the unworthy suggestion.

Immediately after his arrival in Paris Benyovsky wrote to his wife in Hungary, asking her to come to him. She came in mourning. Her son, born in his absence, had recently died. The news of this heightened the interest and sympathy felt for him.

While the count was passing as a distinguished guest through the Paris salons, his companions in misfortune were wandering in distress about the boulevards, and dismally comparing their loved and longed-for Kamchatka with cold, hard Paris. What could they do here? They turned to the Russian Minister. He knew their story, of course. He knew that Benyovsky was bombarding the French Government with fantastic projects. The count was said to be preparing an expedition for the conquest of Kamchatka. The conscientious envoy hastened to send a full report to St Petersburg.

He showed great kindness to the refugees who had come to him, and saw to it that they had food. In the name of the Empress he promised them forgiveness. The promise was kept. The refugees were permitted to return to Russia, and were settled in various Siberian towns. They were left entirely free and unpunished; they were not even sent back to Kamchatka.

On the Public Prosecutor's report to her, Catherine wrote: "The conspirators have inflicted punishment enough on themselves; but we see that the Russian loves his Russia, and my heart cannot remain untouched by their hope for my pardon."

Thus ended the adventurous enterprise. Benyovsky had covered the distance from Bolsheryetsk to Paris—covered it with corpses and broken hearts. And it had all been unnecessary. Of all the fugitives only two, Benyovsky and Windblatt, who returned to Sweden, made good their escape from Russia. Khrushchev entered the French service, but soon returned to his homeland.

Yet was the freedom of two men worth Anastasia's heart and hundreds of deaths? No—even for these two it had all been

unnecessary. At the same time as Benyovsky another participant in the Polish rebellion, the French Colonel de Belcourt, had been taken prisoner. He, too, had been banished into darkest Siberia. A few months after Benyovsky's arrival in Paris Belcourt, too, reached the city; and in 1773 Catherine liberated all the captive Confederates. Belcourt is known to us because he wrote a book on Russia, critical but not unjust.

Benyovsky's memoranda lay in the French Government offices, and slowly passed from hand to hand. Under the influence of his recollections of the fighting on Formosa he proposed the conquest of that island. His suggestion was declined. The Government suggested instead that he should conquer Madagascar.

Next year he proceeded there. His troops made themselves comfortable in the island. Benyovsky tells of the natives' love for him and their desire to elect him as their king. His subjects spoke their love—they destroyed the settlement he had founded and reduced him to fleeing to France.

This time he had an even colder reception at Versailles than in Kamchatka. He was actually put on trial for his activities; but in the end Louis XVI was as mild as Captain Nilov had been: he signed a decree of pardon.

Benyovsky went to Vienna. He entered the Austrian army and marched against the Prussians. But soon he left that service and went to England. There, as always, he was a lion in the drawing-rooms. He set out to write his memoirs. Hyacinth de Magellan, a descendant of the famous navigator, found him a publisher. His memoirs appeared very soon in an English edition, and were at once translated into French, German, and Russian.

But Benyovsky was not the man to spend his life pushing a pen. He preferred conquering island kingdoms. This time he offered to conquer Madagascar for England. All he wanted was three ships and fifty thousand pounds. For this he promised to raise an army of five thousand men in Madagascar, and then proceed with it to India.

William Pitt declined the offer. With the aid of Magellan, who had been completely hypnotized, Benyovsky sailed for America. He arrived there with his wife and a recommendation from Franklin. He founded a company with the support of Baltimore merchants, obtained a ship and goods to the value of four thousand pounds, collected a gang of reckless daredevils, and sailed first to Brazil and thence to Madagascar. He left his wife in Baltimore. They did not see each other again.

In 1785 he landed in Madagascar and set up his throne by the coast; he took the title of "Ruler of all Rulers," and declared war on the French colonists in the island. A frigate sailed from Ile de France with a company of soldiers. When the French had

surrounded Benyovsky's fort and pointed their cannon at it, he called on them to surrender. The French commander was astonished—surely it was for Benyovsky to do the surrendering. He gave the order to open fire.

The siege lasted four days. When the fort was taken Benyovsky was found inside, dead. He lay there in the full dress uniform of a Confederate general. On his breast sparkled the orders of Knight of the Holy Ghost and of Saint Louis. In his pocket was half a piastre, in his heart a shot fired by one of those five thousand subjects who were to have helped him to conquer India.

The merchants of Baltimore who had believed in Benyovsky's star had been mistaken, like everyone else who had placed faith in him.

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Meanwhile in Kamchatka the witnesses of those unusual events had lived on, hunting and fishing and quietly approaching the end of their days.

After the flight in the *St Peter* a commission went to Kamchatka and instituted an inquiry. The Russian Government decided that Kamchatka was not a suitable centre for exiles. It began sending its convicted persons farther from the sea, around Lake Baikal, or to Yakutia, or to the safe region of the Arctic Circle. Bolsheryetsk lost its rank of "capital." After the rising the Governor's seat was moved to Petropavlovsk, a more convenient port, on Avacha Bay.

It should be mentioned that the commission's very full report has not a word about poor Anastasia. This discretion finds its explanation not in any consideration for the family honour of Captain Nilov, but simply in the fact that Captain Nilov never had a daughter Anastasia. Anastasia was a figment of Benyovsky's fancy and his measureless vanity, to which he sacrificed his own good name.

Seven years after Benyovsky's flight the famous Captain Cook came to Alaska. His fellow-voyagers talked to the fur dealer Ismailov. This was the friend of Kamchadalessees whom Benyovsky had marooned on one of the Kuril Islands. The stock of flour had soon disappeared, and the party had gone over to mussels and moss. Half-starved, they were picked up by Russian hunters from Kamchatka.

In Cook's time Ismailov was already a well-known and successful fur dealer. In the talks with the English visitors he avoided all mention of Benyovsky's name; and he put the idea into the heads of the other dealers that the Englishmen had been sent by Benyovsky, and that the Hungarian count was scheming to get

back among them. This was enough to make them all as mum as mice—such horror did the very thought of Benyovsky inspire in them. So says Cook. But it appears that Ismailov was bluffing the Englishmen. He affected horror and told the hunters to do the same, in order to be able to keep silent and betray nothing of their fur dealings, in which the Englishmen were particularly interested.

From Alaska Cook intended to go to Kamchatka. But for the sake of his crew he went first, instead, to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), and there he left his flesh and blood: the cannibals gave up only his bones.

Later his companions King and Clerke reached Kamchatka. There they saw another eye-witness of Benyovsky's deeds—Ivashkin. He was now sixty years old. He still lived in Kamchatka, and had long forgotten all his dreams of freedom. After Benyovsky's flight all the exiles who had refused to join him had been set at liberty. Ivashkin should have been the first of them. But he had been forgotten.

After another nine years the famous French navigator La Pérouse came with two ships to Kamchatka. He sent a young officer, Jean Lesseps, overland through Kamchatka and right across Siberia with a report to Paris on his expedition. This officer, grandfather of Ferdinand Lesseps, the promoter of the Suez Canal, later wrote a book on Siberia. In it he said that the French were in very ill odour in Kamchatka, and this was due to a misunderstanding: someone had spread the false report that Count Benyovsky was a Frenchman.

Young Lesseps was the only member of the La Pérouse expedition who escaped with his life. The rest all came to their end somewhere in the New Hebrides. On Lesseps the gloomy Kamchatka had smiled: it had given him life and good fortune.

Eighteen years later the expedition of the Russian Captain Krusenstern reached Kamchatka. This was in 1805. Krusenstern met a man who knew a lot about Benyovsky—Ivashkin, then eighty-six years old. At last the old man had been remembered. He was offered the chance to go to his home, and the money he would need for the journey. Krusenstern was ready even to take him home with him on board his ship. At first the old man agreed; then he became thoughtful. He bent his white head and murmured:

"Home—home—yes—but where is my home?—I have forgotten."

## RUSSIAN AMERICA

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THE members of Bering's expedition had come back to Kamchatka bringing not only sickness and evil memories but sea-otter skins. Sea-otter furs were then as highly appreciated by the beauties of St Petersburg as by the Peking mandarinesses. The fur dealers paid between twenty-five and forty pounds for a single fur! Before Chirikov had reached St Petersburg new ships were already being built at Okhotsk and in Kamchatka.

Merchants were lured to the eastern ocean not only from Siberia but from central Russia. Men and capital streamed into Kamchatka. Anyone who had the means built his own ship; those who had not, joined with others in a trading company. Five years after Bering's death there were already fifteen companies in existence, and five years after that there were twenty-five. Later the number increased to forty.

In order to sail the ocean nobody in Siberia went to a nautical school. Anyone who dared became captain. A year after the return of the last participants in the Bering expedition Sergeant Yemelyan Bassov appointed himself captain. He took a sailor from the crew of the *St Peter* as pilot—he knew “the way”! Bassov sailed first to Bering Island, where he wintered; next year he went on to Unalaska Island. Clearly the pilot had shown him the right course, for Bassov returned to Petropavlovsk with furs worth two hundred thousand roubles.

In 1745 a new captain arrived. That trustworthy sailor Nevodchikov, who had prayed with Lieutenant Ovzin for their safety, signed a contract with a merchant named Chuprov, was given a ship, sailed to Acha and on to a number of small islands, and returned with a rich haul. He also brought an Aleutian boy, whom he placed with foster-parents that he might learn Russian and serve later as an interpreter and preacher; for Nevodchikov was a God-fearing man and in the islands he had himself begun the conversion of the Aleutians to Christianity. Unfortunately he took all their furs from them as their entrance fee into the Christian church, and if they had no furs he all but took the skins from their own backs.

The captains who came after him adopted the same methods. A trader named Glotov reached the Alaskan mainland in 1759. He spent two years on the island of Unimak, and actually compiled a map of the Aleutian Islands; he baptized many of

the natives, but he killed still more. He, too, came away with rich spoil.

In the following year a trader named Andrean Tolstych brought a group of islands under Russian sovereignty; they are called the Andreanov Islands after him. Another trader, Betchevin, followed him in 1761 with his captain, Pushkarev, to Unalaska. Pushkarev was a Cossack who until then had been engaged in fur collecting on the Kolyma. He worked so energetically in America that he brought home two thousand sea-otter skins. How he "won" them may be judged from the fact that the authorities in Petropavlovsk had him and Betchevin flogged for their cruelty to the Aleutians.

Regulations were then issued requiring that the natives should be treated with humanity and that there should be no atrocities. But nobody took any notice of these regulations. If they had done, the Russian visitors would have been able to pursue their hunt for sea-otters in perfect peace. Instead, in the two following years the Aleutians hunted the Russians while the sea-otters hunted fish in peace.

Suddenly three ships appeared off Unalaska in 1762, all sent out by the same company. They shared out the hunting-fields and went to work. The Aleutians received them with the utmost friendliness. Captain Drushinin, delighted with his reception, went with a small party some distance inland; he sent out ten men to catch foxes and left nine on board as guard. When Drushinin approached an Aleutian encampment, he was invited to enter a tent. Two Cossacks followed him: all three were killed. Their comrades rushed into the tent, killed the Aleutians in it, and opened fire from it. The party were reduced to four; these four, after some days' siege, fought their way back to the shore, to find that their ship had been destroyed and the guard massacred. The ten fox-hunters never returned. The four who had escaped hid on the rocky shore; there they were besieged for another seven weeks in a cave. When the Aleutian watch relaxed they ventured farther along the shore.

Captain Korovin repeated Drushinin's mistake. He trusted the friendly Aleutians and went far into the island with sixteen men, to barter with the natives. The Aleutians did not even pretend to offer hospitality, but fell on him at once: two of his men were killed and several wounded. Korovin and the rest were surrounded, and defended themselves for three whole months; then the four survivors of Drushinin's party came upon them.

Korovin's party succeeded at last in making their way back to his ship, but they still had to fight a night battle with some dozens of Aleutians. At last they just succeeded in raising anchor and escaping. The ship ran ashore at Unimak and was wrecked.

Korovin was able to save his life, with sixteen men. They erected a tent on the shore and there defended themselves for another three months against the Aleutians, until at last Korovin managed to put together the shell of a boat and to cover it with sealskin. In this baidarka he set out to find the third ship. After three days' sail he found on shore the remains of a camp and the dead bodies of the third captain, Medvednikov, and his nineteen companions. There was no sign of the ship.

Korovin set to work on a winter camp, always on the alert against any new attack. By good fortune the successful hunter Glotov came back to Unalaska, and on hearing from the Aleutians of the loss of the three ships he went in search of any survivors. Korovin and his party returned with Glotov to Kamchatka.

The narratives of the two captains aroused a storm of indignation in Kamchatka. A holy war was declared on the Aleutians. Next year troops landed on Unalaska and Unimak under Glotov, Skolovyov, Natrubin, Lazarev, and others. They came to teach the perjured and the ferocious the virtues of faithfulness and compassion. It is said that Skolovyov massacred more than five thousand Aleutians. The figures are unreliable, as always. But it is certain that the heroes' revenge reduced the population of Unalaska and the surrounding islands by at least half.

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The Cossacks would probably have destroyed not only the whole of the Aleutians but their islands as well, if Grigori Ivanovich Shelekhov had not appeared on the scene.

He was a modest trader from Rylsk, in the "gubernia" (province) of Kursk, a central Russian gubernia that has won fame with its nightingales and its racehorses and its cakes and has no connexion with seas and oceans in general or the Pacific in particular. Shelekhov, however, was interested only in trade and not in the least in nightingales or pastries. He travelled to Siberia. With him went another trader from Kursk, Ivan Golikov. The two had set out to try their luck in partnership. Golikov had a little money, Shelekov a lot of pluck. He had in addition a brave and clever wife, who came with him.

Shelekhov was only twenty-eight years old when he sent out his first ship from Okhotsk to the Aleutians. He was fortunate in discovering the one thing most needed for this business, a capable captain. As usual in this region, the captain was not a captain at all; he was only a plain helmsman; but he was a man of outstanding intelligence. On one of his voyages he discovered a whole group of islands, famous to this day for their marine fauna. The group bears the name of this helmsman—the Pribylov Islands.

Pribylov's voyage of discovery enriched not only geography but

the trader Grigori Shelekhov. After two years' cruising Pribylov returned to Okhotsk with a cargo of two thousand beavers, forty thousand sea-otters, six thousand blue foxes, seventeen tons of walrus ivory, and eight and a half tons of whalebone.

Shelekhov became the leading merchant of Okhotsk. He knew how to make the last farthing out of his "catch." In quiet Rylsk he had learnt the art of buying cheap and selling dear. Having made a fortune, he felt that the time had come for going seriously into business. In 1781 he entered into an agreement with Golikov for the founding of a company. The capital amounted to seventy thousand roubles, a stately sum for those times. Immediately after the signing of the agreement Shelekhov built three ships in Okhotsk. While they were building he went to Irkutsk; his wife Natalia sat in his counting-house at Okhotsk and carried on the business. On August 16, 1783, all three ships put out to sea. On board one of them was the leader of the expedition, Shelekhov himself, with his wife.

In late autumn he reached Bering Island with two ships. The third ship disappeared on the way. Not until she had passed two successive winters in the Aleutians did she reach Kadiak.

Shelekhov, after coming successfully through the winter, went on to Unalaska, and from there, with two interpreters and ten reliable Aleutians, in a baidarka to Kadiak. His ships followed him there.

Shelekhov had collected information about these regions before starting his voyage. He knew that the natives were hostile, and he knew why. He dealt honestly with them, gave them hospitality, and permitted none of his men to use violence against them.

One day his men discovered a considerable party of Aleutians; Shelekhov sent envoys to them and invited them to maintain peaceful relations with him. The Aleutians, however, no longer placed faith in words. Soon after these overtures they fell upon him at night. Shelekhov fought them till morning and defeated them.

His victory was complete. He made many prisoners, settled them thirty miles away from the port he had chosen, and kept their children as hostages. He guaranteed "eternal peace" to these Aleutians, and proceeded to form a "native guard" from among them. That was something new in Kadiak! It was an act of colonial policy which no one, in the forty years of hunting of men and animals that had passed in this region, had had the wit to devise. At the same time Shelekhov built a fort by his harbour, and dwelling-houses. He called his new port "Three Saints."

With the fortress, the fleet, the Russian party, and the "Aleutian Guard," Shelekhov had assured his absolute mastery over Kadiak. He proceeded next to the exploration of the sur-



rounding islands and then of the American coast. Since then the strait between Kadiak and the mainland has borne his name. He continued his efforts to secure friendly relations with the Aleutians, but it was not an easy task. There were frequent risings, which he energetically repressed.

His wife, meanwhile, managed the business and spread enlightenment among the natives. She succeeded in baptizing forty of them. It may be that they accepted the new faith only out of gratitude because Natalia had cured their sick wives and fed their children. It may have been so! but it was, in any case, a new method of conversion that Natalia and Shelekhov introduced into the Aleutian Islands.

A start had been made in America—Kadiak was now Russian. It was a new fulcrum, but the arm of the main lever, as Shelekhov knew, moved from St Petersburg. Out of the three hundred and sixty degrees of longitude that arm extended through one hundred and eighty.

On May 22, 1786, Shelekhov loaded his ship with furs, and after a ceremonial parade and firing of salutes he raised anchor and set sail for home. In "Three Saints" he left a garrison under the command of his assistant Samoilov. From his citadel waved the Russian flag.

He reached Bolsheryetsk safely, and proposed to sail on to Okhotsk. But when he had gone on shore with the crew a storm came, the ship dragged her anchor, and she was driven out to sea. He did not want to wait for the ship to be found; he doubted whether she would be, and he decided to go overland with his wife, past the Koryaks' "turnpike," to Okhotsk. It was winter, and they travelled in reindeer-sleighs. When snowstorms made travelling impossible they set up a tent and waited for better weather. Natalia meanwhile did her best to spread comfort in the snow-hut. In April 1787, eleven months after leaving Kadiak, they arrived at Okhotsk.

Shelekhov had a hurried discussion with his partner. When he told him of the loss of the ship with her cargo of furs, Golikov's face fell. But Shelekhov consoled him. "Two more are following," he said; "you will have enough. But that's a small matter. The business is assuming undreamed-of proportions—it seems to me that a Russian America is coming into existence!"

He went with Golikov to Irkutsk. Golikov, furnished with documents, travelled on into Russia; Shelekhov remained behind in order to report to General Yakobi, Governor of Irkutsk. He was not sparing of colour in his description of his deeds on Kadiak Island. He told the General of the murderous combats with an army of four thousand Aleutians, and of his success in converting almost the whole population of Kadiak to the true

faith. These, as Shelekhov well knew, were embellishments that would not fail to make an impression. But the essence of his report lay in another direction. At that time the trade with China via Kyakhta had come entirely to a standstill. Shelekhov pointed out that the American furs could be carried direct by sea to China, the vessels then proceeding on with tea to Okhotsk. He "laid the American islands at the feet of the Empress," and asked for the support of the Government.

Governor Yakobi was of German origin, but he was a thorough Siberian; his father had been commander of the fortress at Selenginsk. He saw that Shelekhov's plans had a solid basis; he knew that if this opportunity was missed America would slip out of Russia's hold. He sent a full report to Catherine, in which he supported Shelekhov in everything.

Meanwhile partner Golikov did himself well in pastries in his native Kursk, but without wasting time. He had already talked to the right people, and already one and another were walking about in a beaver cap or a sea-otter collar. When the Empress came through Kursk, Golikov was presented to her. He told Catherine about Shelekhov's expedition and spread before her a map of her new possessions. "His *rapport* gives my heart considerable satisfaction," said this former princess of Anhalt-Zerbst to him in her mixture of Russian and French, both spoken with a strong German accent, which to her astonishment her subjects followed with difficulty. Golikov, too, could not understand. But after the audience he was told that Her Majesty was conferring a medal on him and that she also wanted to see Shelekhov and hear his story.

When Shelekhov came to St Petersburg, Governor Yakobi's report had already arrived. A commission had been appointed to study it. Shelekhov managed to get into touch separately with each of its members. After his audience with the Empress this ex-trader of Rylsk was ennobled and given a sword and a gold medal set with brilliants to wear round his neck on a sky-blue ribbon!

It was pleasant to have to do with a man like this, who talked of his ships and his troops and his islands in the same tone in which a landowner will talk of his meadows and his beehives. Among many others who sought to make his acquaintance was Subov, an official of the Senate. Subov was a man without fortune and at his wits' end how to place his growing son, a handsome good-for-nothing then serving as a sergeant in a regiment of the Guards. Shelekhov clapped the youngster on his shoulder, promised to keep him in mind, and meanwhile made him a present of a snuff-box of walrus ivory.

Meanwhile the commission had studied Yakobi's report and had heard Shelekhov himself. His arguments were convincing.

Trade with China was dead—he, Shelekhov, offered to revive it. He had discovered America for Russia. Might they not find their Mexico and Peru there? Might not they, too, receive a stream of gold from there?

Shelekhov returned to his enterprises with a Government loan of two hundred thousand roubles for their extension. Catherine declined to give him the support of military force, but General Yakobi was instructed to have thirty copper shields made with the Imperial Russian arms and the inscription "Russian territory" and to hand them over to Shelekhov. The latter promised to nail them to the Aleutian Islands and to America.

In Okhotsk he built two new ships, loaded them with food, knives, beads, and copper eagles, and sent them to Kadiak. There his representative began bartering and distributed the eagles through the region. For a sea-otter he paid eight to ten bead necklaces. At first he planted the eagles on poles, but when the Aleutians stole them he distributed them among friendly "toyons"—chieftains who were also priests. The toyons regarded the eagles as gods, and on their receipt they recognized the sovereignty of Grigori Shelekhov.

Meanwhile the "sovereign" himself lived at Irkutsk, making journeys from time to time to Okhotsk and St Petersburg. He was carrying on high policy, and knew that this is always conducted from a great distance. He lived in intimate friendship with Governor Yakobi, and was the next most important person in the city—until he became the most important of all.

That he became very soon. From Irkutsk Shelekhov ruled not only Kadiak and Unalaska but soon St Petersburg.

This happened because he had "luck." "Luck!" it is not chance but talent. Why did dozens of hard-boiled pirate captains come to grief among the crags of Alaska but Shelekhov remain unscathed? Why could no one venture across the territory of the Koryaks when he and Natalia crossed it without danger? And how was it, finally, that Platon Subov, the good-for-nothing at St Petersburg to whom he had given that snuff-box and with whose undistinguished father he was on friendly terms, advanced in three years from sergeant to Master-General of the Ordnance, to Count, to knight of every Russian order, and to two of the highest Prussian orders as well?

This last question, at all events, can be answered. Subov had been transferred to sentry duty in the Empress's palace. On July 5, 1789, it was reported to Prince Potemkin that since the evening before Sergeant Subov had been "going through upstairs"—that is to say, through the upper passage from which a secret door—secret, but known to many people—led to the bedchamber of Her Imperial Majesty.

Sergeant Subov was twenty-one years old; the Empress was sixty. The "dear child," as she called Captain Subov a few days later, had a great fondness for snuff-boxes. Shelekhov sent another one as a present to Colonel Subov, but this one was not of walrus ivory but of pure gold; on its lid a little ship made of diamonds floated on waves of emerald. General Subov sent him his thanks and asked him to come and see him.

Shelekhov's house at Irkutsk became the centre for the local aristocracy. In his satin coat, wearing a powdered peruke with a little plait, and decorated with the ribbon of his order and his sword, he gave hospitality to the Governor and the nobility of the town. Music blared, the young people danced, the menials were run off their feet. All this was tiresome but necessary. Mademoiselle Shelekhov was of marriageable age, but she was not of outstanding beauty, and her mother was anxious.

Rezanov, the Chief Justice of Irkutsk, was a frequent guest at the Shelekhovs'. He was a propertyless aristocrat, freezing in Siberia for the sake of his son, who was in the Guards in St Petersburg. The son was handsome, ambitious, and gifted—qualities often met with in young men with no money. It looked as if he would have to resign his commission in the Guards, because he had not the means for living up to the style of the regiment.

The old judge told Shelekhov of his anxiety about his son. Shelekhov told him of his anxiety about his daughter. After the two had parted, each of them had a long talk with his wife.

In 1790 young Rezanov came to Irkutsk. His first visit, as was due, was made to the Governor; his second—to the Shelekhovs. The whole family were waiting excitedly for him. He went back to St Petersburg with a fur of genuine "crown sables" for the "dear child"; Shelekhov begged him to do him the favour of handing it over with a personal note from him. Young Rezanov gladly did him this favour. Soon afterwards he went into the service of Her Imperial Majesty's private secretariat, and from there he was appointed chief secretary to the Senate.

At times the Empress entrusted him with personal commissions. Soon he bought a house. Madame Rezanov, *née* Shelekhov, furnished it comfortably. In this house, at dinner with the Minister of Justice, the famous poet DersHAVIN, Pushkin's teacher, read his verses in honour of Grigori Shelekhov, the conqueror of America. In this house the Rezanovs received Count Subov.

Now Shelekhov had a permanent envoy at the court of the Empress and her grown-up "child"—his son-in-law, Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov. The envoy was young, only twenty-six years of age, but what did that matter? His patron Subov was only twenty-two; Shelekhov himself was no more than forty-three.

Shelekhov was now assured of support from St Petersburg for all his plans. He prepared to extend his whole enterprise in his own fashion. But the final stroke still required certain preparations. What was happening along the shores of Alaska?

Everything was going on as Shelekhov had arranged. Ships bearing furs and walrus ivory kept coming in. But their cargoes kept growing lighter. The sea-otters and seals were beginning to be exterminated, and were moving away: northwards or southwards? Their new resorts must be discovered. The troublesome thing was that the search was being made not only by Shelekhov's staff but by the employees of other traders.

Still worse, the furry treasure of Russian America was not known only to the Russians. More than once Spaniards had appeared; but they were without skill as hunters, and, in addition to that, they froze there. It was different with the Dutchmen. The East India Company, too, had begun exporting furs from this region. Since the visits of Cook and La Pérouse the sea-otter had become world-famous. Ships were coming from London, Boston, San Francisco, from Batavia, Canton, Bombay!

Shelekhov could not himself go to Alaska—he had to be in Irkutsk to carry on high policy. There was another man who would no doubt have done instead of him, Alexander Andreyevich Baranov; but he would not go. He would have been the very man. No Cossack pirate, but a Russian merchant like Shelekhov himself. He had come to Siberia, and that showed that he had pluck. He had explored the Arctic coast, and that showed that he had a sound constitution and that he was no more afraid of cold than of the natives' arrows. He was a man, too, of initiative: in order to trade with the Chukchis and the Yukagirs he had set up a distillery and a bead factory in Irkutsk. He bartered for furs with his own vodka and his own beads—a real, proper merchant!

One day the Chukchis attacked Baranov's trading settlement on the Anadyr, plundered the whole stock of furs and merchandise, and set it on fire. Shelekhov renewed his suggestion that Baranov should go to America for him. This time Baranov accepted the proposal.

Before setting out he had a thorough discussion with Shelekhov.

"Make sure of your hold everywhere," said Shelekhov. "Go ahead in the north—that is where the animals are retiring. Find out where the Spaniards are at work in the south. Take possession of all that has not been taken already."

"So far as 'taking' goes, you may leave it in my hands; don't worry," said Baranov. "The only thing that worries me is the Swedes. We are at war with them. Suppose warships suddenly make their appearance?"

"My son-in-law has been writing to me about that from St

Petersburg. Don't fight them, trick them. Send Indians to them, let them offer them furs; give them some of our own to offer; tell them to invite the Swedes to land to barter for more. You could paint some of our men to look like the Indians, and then—board the ships and destroy them."

Shelekhov blinked slyly at his partner. Baranov pulled a wry face.

"Has Rezanov thought all this out?"

"No, it's not all his idea—it seems that my patron, Count Platon Subov—"

"He has the brains of a statesman."

"That's a matter of opinion. Count Platon's special gift is not in his head but farther down. May God preserve his health!"

In August 1790 Baranov sailed from Okhotsk. He set his course for Kadiak, but the wind drove him on to Unalaska and his ship went to pieces on the rocks. It was not a good start, but Baranov showed the stuff he was made of. He saved all he could from the wreck and took up winter quarters. He got on to tolerable terms with the Aleutians, and in the course of eight months he learned their language and their hunting methods. In the spring of the following year he built baidarkas, and at the end of June he entered the port of "Three Saints."

There he found work proceeding for him at full steam already. Able assistants had been sent out by Shelekhov for him. A man of outstanding usefulness was a trader and hunter named Ismailov, a man of wide experience, who had exciting stories to tell of his adventures of twenty years earlier with the "cursed Hungarian."

With Ismailov and a staff of Aleutian assistants Baranov set about the exploration of the coast of Alaska. The proud tribe of the Koloshes had long been at enmity with the Aleutians. When its men saw the Aleutians in the company of "pale-faces" they sharpened their tomahawks and crouched behind the rocks. At night they rushed out to attack them. A fierce struggle ended with two Russians, nine Aleutians, and twelve Indians dead. The losses were about equal, as the fighting had been hand-to-hand. Sixteen of Baranov's men were wounded; he himself had a slight injury.

That was the baptism of blood that was inevitable in Russian America. Now there were more serious matters to attend to. The chief problem was that of food. Ships bringing provisions came irregularly, sometimes not at all for months. Then there was starvation. Baranov began to build a fleet of his own. He organized an expedition to bring timber from the mainland, and built the first Russian ship launched from American soil. In 1794 the three-master *Phoenix* sailed with a cargo of furs for Okhotsk.

A year later the *Phoenix* made her second appearance, followed by the *Olga*.

Shelekhov meanwhile spent his time partly at Irkutsk and partly at Okhotsk, elaborating his plans. They were far-reaching. It was necessary to push on to the north, toward Bering Straits. For this purpose he formed a new "North American Company," and delegated to it the task of discovering a passage to Baffin Bay. A more convenient route needed to be found from Irkutsk to the Pacific: Shelekhov urged that the route from Siberia along the Shilka and the Amur should be used! He resolved to go himself down the Amur as Poyarkov had done long before. But the Government could not make up its mind to equip an Amur expedition; it was afraid of embroilment with China.

"The time will come," said Shelekhov. And come it did—sixty years later.

Meanwhile Shelekhov did not omit to bring pressure to bear through his son-in-law in St Petersburg on his "patron." He had initiated Rezanov into all his plans. Rezanov was a jurist; he was to work out the project of a new company to take over the execution of Shelekhov's plans in America. The project was nearly completed when, in 1795, Shelekhov died.

His widow Natalia took his place. She was free of her cares about her daughter. At times it seemed as if Rezanov's marriage had not been purely a love-match, as if her daughter was not entirely happy. On the other hand, her son-in-law entirely shared her husband's ideas, which were so dear to her, and was fired with enthusiasm for them. If he was not all that he should be toward her daughter, she forgave him.

Natalia remained at the head of the company, and carried on its affairs for two years with Rezanov's help. Baranov asked for no further instructions; he had no need of any; he was himself brimming over with projects. He went on sending ships with furs and all sorts of requests. He wanted artisans and farm-workers. These were selected from among the exiles and sent to him. He wanted eagle shields; they were sent. He asked for the dispatch of warships—but Natalia and Rezanov could not send him those.

In 1796 Catherine died. The "dear child" wandered through the palace in his general's uniform, weeping and asking for a glass of water, but no one took any notice of him. His star had fallen—but Rezanov's shone yet more brightly. The new Tsar Paul kicked out his mother's pensioned lovers and the titled flunkys of her court. But Rezanov was neither the one nor the other. He became the Tsar's friend, and remained the trustee of his mother-in-law, the widow Shelekhov.

She had spent all her life hand-in-hand with her Grigori, and now, before her own end, she crowned his work. Mylnikov, a

merchant of Irkutsk, founded a new fur trading company. He got together a capital of 129,000 roubles. He turned to Natalia Shelekhov.

The grey-haired widow, with round silver spectacles, sat in the counting-house at the same spot her dead husband had warmed. She understood at once. She not only accepted Mylnikov as partner, but proposed that all the fur companies should be amalgamated—that is to say, that a fur trust should be formed for the exploitation of Russian America.

The trader's missis who had grown up in a little Russian provincial town in the middle of the eighteenth century, and had then seen life in Alaska and by Lake Baikal, tried conclusions with the Hudson's Bay Company!

The new enterprise needed the approval of St Petersburg. Natalia sent all the needed documents to Rezanov, and prepared to go herself to St Petersburg, but she fell ill. "Harness the reindeer," she said in her delirium, "I am going to Grigori." They were her last words.

Rezanov had mass said for her in St Petersburg; he entered into possession as her rightful heir, and took over the conduct of business. In 1799, at his instance, the "Russo-American Company" was founded, with an authorized capital of 724,000 roubles. It had sixteen shareholders. In addition to Rezanov, Golikov, and Mylnikov, they included members of the highest aristocracy. Baranov, too, received a share. The company received for twenty years the monopoly of the exploitation of all that was to be found on and beneath the soil of the Kuril Islands, the Aleutians, and Alaska with its islands northward from the 55th degree of latitude. The company had the duty, needless to say, of caring for the spread of Christianity in its territories.

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The competition of the Russian hunters and traders was ended. No one could do anything in Alaska without Baranov's permission. Baranov was autocrat of Alaska.

The autocrat himself knew nothing of this. He was suffering from a succession of misfortunes. He was having a hard struggle. For eight years he had fought with the same difficulties with which Yermak had been able to cope only for three years. He had fought with the Indians as Yermak had fought with the Tatars; he had also fought with the ocean, the fogs, the reefs, with hunger, scurvy, and insubordinate captains. The captains, some of them nobles and ex-officers of the navy, thought they knew better than he. Most of them he quickly reduced to submission, and his only regret was that his "mean" origin did not permit him to fight these noble dunderheads and put a bullet into them.



In April 1796 he proceeded southward in the schooner *Konstantin*, with a crew of two hundred and twenty Russian sailors and a flotilla of three hundred and fifty baidarkas. In each baidarka were two Aleutian hunters.

The sea was stormy, the shore inaccessible. On May 2 thirty baidarkas were destroyed by the waves, and fifty Aleutians lost their lives. After a terrible day the troop landed. In the dusk the Koloshes fell upon the encampment. The Aleutians, terrified, fled, some into the forest, where the Indians scalped them, and some to the rocky shore, where they hid. The Russians defended themselves. In the fighting Baranov lost two Russians and sixty Aleutians.

On May 25, after constant alertness and repeated fighting as he hunted and collected furs, Baranov reached the island that now bears his name. He landed in a bay where the town of Sitka is now. He announced to the chief of the Indians on the island the annexation of the island to the Russian empire. He handed him presents and told him that he wished to trade in peace with his honourable tribal subjects. Next day, when the axes of the Russian carpenters had already begun to resound, an American ship entered the bay. The captain, like all the captains of fur ships, was not very communicative, especially to a competitor. "Yes, yes," he said after the second glass of rum, "the Indians here—" and after the fourth he added: "Satan sent them here on leave."

Baranov knew the Indians just as well as the American captain did. He built a fort and called it Arkhangelsk. Then he returned to Kadiak.

Two years after his departure, one warm night in July, when part of the garrison had gone fishing and the rest were asleep, the Koloshes fell upon Arkhangelsk, killed all whom they found there, and destroyed and burnt all Baranov's buildings. Five men and eleven women, Russians and Aleutians, who had escaped from the massacre, were taken charge of by an English captain, Barber, who was cruising in those waters. The Indian chieftain—he had been christened "Michael" by the Russians—presented himself with his nephew to Captain Barber and demanded the surrender of the Russians and Aleutians.

Barber ordered the uncle and nephew to be bound, and declared that they would not be set free until they had delivered to him the one Russian they had taken prisoner. The Indians came up with wild war-cries, and prepared to board the English ship. A few discharges of shot damped their enthusiasm; they gave up the last prisoner and the skins they had stolen from Arkhangelsk, took over their chieftain, and rowed ashore.

Barber sailed to Kadiak. As he entered the port of "Three

Saints" it occurred to him that England and Russia were at war, and accordingly he informed Baranov that he would release the Russian subjects he had saved only on payment of a ransom of fifty thousand roubles in cash or furs. Baranov replied that the rescue had already been paid for through the furs Barber had received from the Arkhangelsk stocks by negotiation with the Koloshes.

Barber sent the message, "I shall shoot."

"So shall I," replied Baranov.

Finally the two compromised on a payment of ten thousand roubles, for which the altruistic rescuer signed a receipt.

Soon after this Baranov learned of the founding of the Russo-American Company, and of his inclusion among the shareholders and his appointment as Governor of Alaska. At the same time the Order of Saint Vladimir had been conferred on him. Baranov ordered flags to be flown and the bells to be rung. He held a parade and gave a banquet in the evening. After the choir had sung his favourite song, "When we sailed to Kadiak," he got up and announced that he would establish out of his own means a school for Russian and Aleutian and Russo-Aleutian children. There were ironical cheers, and he was barracked in the Russian style.

Toward the morning he sat at the head of the table with a copper-coloured face and flaming eyes. Sweat rolled off his bald head. "Good-for-nothings! Spongers!" he roared. "You have given up my Arkhangelsk to the Redskins!"

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“ALL THAT HAS NOT BEEN TAKEN—”

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THE brief and stern rule of Tsar Paul was forgotten; the sun of the young Alexander shone on St Petersburg. A year after his mother-in-law's death Rezanov lost his wife. He remained alone in the magnificent house, and while he suffered no real grief the period of mourning made his days gloomy. He devoted himself with redoubled energy to the business of the Russo-American Company.

Business was developing splendidly. Baranov sent furs regularly. People at court flocked to Rezanov with requests for shares. In the course of three years the number of shareholders had increased from the original seventeen to four hundred. The price of shares rose in that period from 1,000 roubles to 3,727. In 1802 Alexander I became a shareholder, with a holding of 10,000 roubles; the Tsaritsa and the Tsarevich followed with similar investments.

A direct result of the Tsar's interest in the company was the grant of an eight-year Government loan of 250,000 roubles; a year later a loan of 100,000 followed, and three years later a third loan was granted of 200,000 roubles. The private affair of the Shelekhov family had become a State affair—just as, long ago, the private affair of the Stroganov family had done.

Rezanov was a most capable diplomat, jurist, and business man. He had a great gift of seizing other people's ideas and setting them down on paper, but he was less fertile in ideas of his own. Baranov wrote to him that it was absolutely necessary to discover means of sending food to Alaska. He wrote that any extension of business was impossible, since the people suffered from chronic hunger. They were never free from scurvy. The salt meat sent to them from Siberia took so long to make the journey that even the dogs of Kadiak refused to eat it. Months went by without a sight of bread. It was simply mad to try to feed the American islands from western Siberia via Okhotsk.

One morning after this letter came, Rezanov was sitting in his silk dressing-gown before his toilet table, after a scented bath. The table was laden with flasks and brushes and salves. He was filing his nails and thinking: “Of course it is mad, that is clear. But how else are they to be fed?”

How? The answer was given by young Lieutenant Krusenstern. He was an able and cultured officer. He had studied in

England, and with another Russian officer, Lissiansky, he had fought on board English ships against the fleet of the French Convention. Later he was sent on board an English trading vessel to Indian and Chinese ports in order to acquaint himself with their commerce. In Canton he had seen an English ship that had brought a huge cargo of furs from America. Krusenstern then grasped what Shelekhov had realized long before him. On his return to Russia he submitted to the Ministry of Marine a memorandum on the organization of fur exports to China direct from Alaska, dispensing with the absurd route via Okhotsk and Kyakhta. He considered it possible to furnish supplies to Russian America by sea—from Kronstadt. He proposed that an experimental voyage should first be attempted.

Krusenstern's proposal was approved by Alexander. The young officer, who had not expected that for a moment, was appointed leader of the expedition. Two ships were acquired for it in London—the *Nadeshda* (*Hope*) and the *Neva*. Lissiansky was appointed captain of the *Neva*, and Krusenstern of the *Nadeshda*.

Krusenstern's plan gave Rezanov the idea he had wanted. He worked it out and formulated it excellently. He represented personally to Alexander that Russia could give Russian America diplomatic and even military support, but not economic. "In the mother's womb the child is nourished through the umbilical cord," he contended; "but once the child is born the cord is cut." Commercial relations must be established on all sides, particularly with China, and also with Japan.

When the *Nadeshda* and the *Neva* were ready to sail and had taken in the shipbuilding materials and instruments which Baranov had demanded, the Tsar made a visit of inspection to the two ships. It was a thorough inspection, and the Tsar had a long conversation with Krusenstern. He told him that the ships were to carry out the first Russian circumnavigation of the world; all Russian diplomats abroad had been informed. With a captivating smile the Emperor added: "The voyage will be a long one, but you need have no anxiety. Your wife will have fifteen hundred roubles a year for ten years, in addition to your usual pay."

The Tsar gently waved aside Krusenstern's profuse thanks, and continued: "You will also have on board our minister plenipotentiary, Chamberlain Rezanov, to take to Japan and thence to Kadiak."

A few days before Alexander's visit of inspection Rezanov had received his appointment as Chamberlain and the Order of Saint Anne, first class, on its splendid blue band. "Rezanov," the Tsar had said, "is the most fertile in ideas of all our diplomats."

On August 8, 1803, the *Nadeshda* and the *Neva* left Kronstadt harbour. They went in company to Copenhagen, Falmouth,

Teneriffe, Brazil, Cape Horn, and Hawaii. From there Lissiansky sailed in the *Neva* to Kadiak, and Krusenstern and Rezanov in the *Nadeshda* to Kamchatka.

Lissiansky had been hoping for a good holiday in Kadiak, but the sight of its poor port, of the sparse vegetation, and of the little huts on the coast, had been a disappointment for him. Still more was he depressed by the news that two years before his arrival Arkhangelsk had been destroyed by Indians, and that Baranov had proceeded there on a new expedition and requested the *Neva* to follow him thither as quickly as possible.

Baranov had refused to put up with the loss of Arkhangelsk. For two years the Indians had refused to allow his hunters into their territory, and they were behaving as if they had rights in Baranov Island. He had equipped a considerable force and had entrusted himself, with a few dozen Russians and some hundreds of Aleutians, to the waves. Baranov and the Russians sailed in two sloops, which were not absolutely safe vessels; the Aleutians went in their baidarkas, so that many of them did not arrive.

As they entered Arkhangelsk harbour, they saw the shore covered with hundreds of Kolosh boats. Alongside Arkhangelsk the Koloshes had themselves erected forts, and had settled in them.

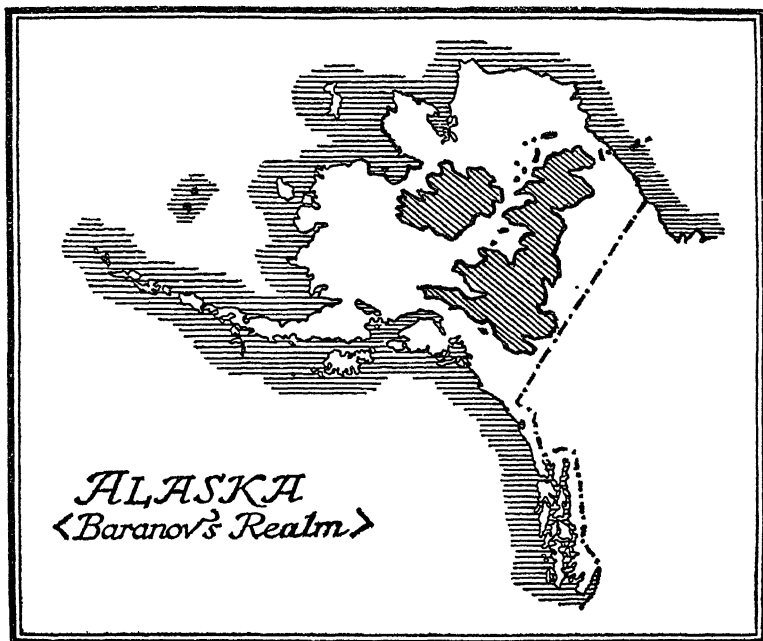
Baranov landed and fortified a position on the coast. The Indians entered into negotiation with him. Baranov demanded hostages from them and a complete capitulation. He made his demands in a very imperious style, though he could see clearly that he was unable to capture the Indian Arkhangelsk. The Indians were armed with the guns they had captured two years earlier; in addition they had received not a few weapons from foreign captains. Baranov's situation was pretty serious. At that moment Lissiansky arrived.

Baranov now had a warship at his disposal. Once more he proposed to the Indians to conclude peace. They replied that after the toyons had fed the black vixen she had wagged her tail in dissent. Baranov gave the order for *Neva* to open fire on the fortress. Most of the shots fell on the rampart and buried themselves in it without injuring anybody; the shots that entered the Indians' camp probably did damage, but the Indians took no notice of it. Lissiansky then fired on the Indians' baidarkas and destroyed a large number of them. In reply to this came lamentations from the fort, but then all was quiet again.

During the cannonade Baranov had been standing ready with his "infantry" on the shore. He prepared to attack with his troops, took a pistol in each hand, and led them to the assault. The Russians roared "Hurrah!" and the Aleutians shook their spears and gave their own war-cry. The wind carried away Baranov's hat. His big bald patch shone in the van like a land-

mark. That bald head was famous all along the American shore: the hunters declared that Baranov had deliberately acquired it so that the Indians should be unable to scalp him.

To the enemy war-cry the Koloshes replied with silence. As the troops came within firing range they received them with a salvo of shot and a cloud of arrows. Men fell on all sides. In a moment there was nothing more to be seen of the Aleutians. Baranov stood with his arm shot through, surrounded by Russian



RUSSIA'S AMERICAN POSSESSION IN 1867  
(The hatching shows the British Isles on the same scale)

comrades. The Indians rushed upon them. They made a fighting retreat, carrying their wounded with them.

At that moment Lissiansky began firing shot after shot into the dense mass of Indians. They stopped their advance. Baranov returned to his landing-place. Ten of his men were dead. He was taken back on board the *Neva*.

While the surgeon bound his arm he drank tot after tot of rum, shouting orders and robust and homely Russian curses between the gulps. Then he turned upon Lissiansky and shouted that they must go a very different way to work against this Satan's brood.

With a bound arm and a swollen face he supervised next day the preparation of a raft for taking cannon ashore. Toward

evening the Indians came with a flag of truce. Once more they refused to submit, claiming that the black vixen forbade it and also that there was no reason why they should submit. Three days later a landing-party once more gained possession of a stretch of the shore, and destroyed the last of the Indians' baidarkas. That was a heavy blow: the loss of their fleet meant hunger for the Indians, since without their boats they could not hunt or fish. On the same day the transfer of the cannon to the raft began, for conveying ashore. Throughout the night a strange wailing was heard from the fortifications. Only at dawn did it cease.

In the morning Baranov landed once more. Once more he went to the attack; he had ordered the artillery to fire the moment the Indians were about to make a rush. But there was no sign of Indians. Baranov stormed the rampart and jumped down into the inner court: it was empty. On the ground lay thirty dead Indians and alongside them several dead children. These had been killed by their own parents on the toyons' orders, so that they should not betray the retreat by their cries.

Baranov rebuilt the fort as Novo-Arkhangelsk. He built dwellings, baths, a school, a church, and warehouses. He installed cannon and developed the port. The Indians disturbed him no more. They had withdrawn into the depth of the island, or, scattered and starving on the shore, had submitted. In the following spring the toyons came of their own accord to sue for peace. Baranov gave them a hospitable reception, and gave the chief toyon a cloak of red cloth, trimmed with ermine; the others received blue and grey cloaks without the trimming. He also fed them so well for three days that the Great Spirit himself came over them, moved them to agree to all Baranov's proposals, and then swayed the earth beneath their feet.

The new port proved very serviceable to foreign captains. On their arrival Baranov entertained them and drank gin and vodka with them. They told him the latest news—that the new Emperor of the French, who was no taller than Baranov, had burnt the Roman Pope at the stake, had shut up twelve kings in a cage, and was going to conquer England from an air balloon.

Baranov drained one liqueur glass after another, with the speed and accuracy of a good carpenter hammering nails, and while the old salts tuned up their song of Janet of Boston he reflected that if the people were at each other's throats in Europe it was as well to hurry up with the building and safeguarding of Russian America.

He transferred his capital to Novo-Arkhangelsk, now Sitka. He lived in modest style. But his house was always full of people; he loved to have noise and life about him. He always had many

women—old and young—with him. Nobody knew what they did for him. He said he taught the young ones and learned from the old ones. When he flew into a rage the plates and glasses flew about the heads of young and old alike. Without any embarrassment he presented to his visitors as his wife a middle-aged Indian woman with a proud face and impenetrable eyes. If he was ill she never left his bedside.

One person alone was safe from the plate-throwing—his daughter. She had her father's blue eyes and her mother's proud profile. Baranov provided her with a German maid and a piano. If he had a free moment he sat down next the piano, his daughter played him the "Maiden's Prayer," and he was moved to tears. Anyone who had anything to ask of him tried always to get a word with him after the "Prayer."

Baranov was now fifty-nine years old, the age to which Bering had lived on those shores. But he was beset by no doubts. Before him lay the Pacific Ocean. Behind him was the Yankees' republic, and on the farther shore he saw the empire of the slit-eyed Chinese. Little Japan could be left out of account; of more importance was New Spain. "Take all that has not been taken already," Grigori Shelekhov had said.



## Chapter 21

### RUSSO-SPANISH ROMANCE

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AFTER forty-six days' sail Rezanov and Krusenstern entered Petropavlovsk harbour. Five weeks' rest; then the *Nadeshda* hoisted sail again and made for Nagasaki.

The opening of Japan to Russian commerce had interested the Government of St Petersburg since the days of Peter the Great. But so far nothing had been achieved. In 1782 a Japanese ship was wrecked on the coast of the Aleutians. Captain and crew were rescued, taken to Irkutsk, and set to teach Japanese to the diplomats stationed there. Ten years later Catherine II commanded that the Governor of Siberia should send the Japanese back to their country, accompanied by a "not particularly high" official. The official was to enter into a preliminary discussion of the opening of trade relations between Russia and Japan. In 1792 Lieutenant Laxman left Okhotsk on this mission; he sailed to Hakodate, drove thence to the town of Matsumaye, and there negotiated with officials who had been sent there for the purpose from the capital. In the end the Japanese Government declared that it was grateful for the return of its subjects, but that the Russians were free to retain them if they wished. For the future, Russian ships were forbidden to approach the Japanese coast, except that one ship a year might come to Nagasaki.

The disturbed state of Europe resulting from the French Revolution prevented the Russians from profiting by Laxman's voyage; even one ship a year would have been an opening of commercial relations. The opportunity was let slip. Now Rezanov meant to recover it if possible.

He took with him rich presents and a letter from the Tsar to the Mikado. But he was given a more than cool reception. For six months he remained at Nagasaki, negotiating all the time only with subordinate officials.

During this period Rezanov learned Japanese, and even compiled a Japanese-Russian dictionary. He never gave up hope, and was busy meditating a witty report on his audience with the Mikado when the answer from the Japanese Government reached him. This stated that the Japanese felt extraordinarily flattered by the Russian Government's interest in them and thanked it very much for the presents; but presents must be answered with presents and these must be transmitted by an envoy. The Japanese were, however, too poor to give presents, while the

journey abroad was prohibited by Japanese law. This being so, the presents were therewith humbly returned; and thenceforth Russians were entirely prohibited from sending ships to Japan. If, however, they were determined to trade with her, would they be good enough to do so through the agency of the Dutch.

The Dutch had always been good traders, and they alone had succeeded in gaining a firm foothold in Japan. Clearly they knew how to give efficient protection to their monopoly.

The dream of the Mikado had faded into nothingness. The witticisms had become empty sounds. *Nadeshda* sailed back to Petropavlovsk. Krusenstern explored the Japanese coast, Sakhalin, and the Kuril Islands, and entered the results on the map. Rezanov sat in the cabin and cogitated.

At Petropavlovsk he left Krusenstern, who sailed for home. Rezanov had decided to inspect his company's possessions. After a long voyage he came at last to Novo-Arkhangelsk.

He was welcomed with the firing of salutes and with a splendid parade. Baranov received him as his principal, the heir and son-in-law of his old friend Shelekhov. He charmed the gentleman from St Petersburg. "An oddity, but a very serviceable natural product," Rezanov wrote of him—"a man out of the ordinary!" The two were excellent complements of each other. Baranov radiated ideas; Rezanov absorbed them like a sponge, and then formulated them as neatly and accurately as a typewriter. The two worked out together a comprehensive programme including the improvement of the conditions of existence of the staff and the natives, the building of hospitals and schools, and the extension of missionary work. The main question was that of trade with New Spain.

This needed a diplomat, and that function Rezanov took upon himself. It gave him the means of effacing the unpleasant memories of Japan. He wintered in Novo-Arkhangelsk—it may be imagined how pleasant the experience must have been for the gentleman from St Petersburg!—and in March 1806 he set sail in the brig *Juno* for San Francisco. Lieutenant Davydov was in command; his friend Lieutenant Khvostov was first officer. The crew consisted of a hundred Russians and Aleutians. Needless to say, there was a naturalist and physician on board, in the person of Herr von Langsdorff.

On April 4 the *Juno* dropped anchor in San Francisco harbour. After their winter of privation, all now enjoyed the luxuriance of a sub-tropical spring. Instead of the stench of decaying corpses of marine animals and of pickled hides, the air was fragrant with blossom and the scent of pinewoods.

Davydov got into a pinnace to go ashore. After him, as was to be expected, Dr Langsdorff jumped into the boat.

On the beach stood a group of picturesque people with feathered hats and white trousers. Some had muskets in their hands, others had pistols sticking out of their girdles. A handsome young man came away from the group.

Davydov gave a military salute: "Lieutenant Davydov, of the Imperial Russian Navy." "Don Luis Arguello, representing the commandant," replied the young man, raising his hat.

Both had spoken at once—one in Russian, the other in Spanish. Then both of them laughed. At that moment there appeared suddenly and silently between the two, as if conjured up out of nothing, a black soutane. Padre José Urias said something in Latin.

Who could understand and answer, if not Dr Langsdorff?

West Coast manners at that time were patriarchal. The handsome young man was acting as commandant of San Francisco in place of his father, who had driven to Monterey, where the Spanish Governor of California lived.

The Russians were given a hospitable reception. Don Luis invited Rezanov and his party to a meal. The commandant's modest little house had old-fashioned furniture; the floor was covered with simple fibre mats. But the meal was served on silver dishes. The Russians had come in full dress uniform, glittering with orders and gold lace; the Spaniards were in no way behind them in splendour. In addition to Padre José, Padre Martin was at the table. He spoke French, Langsdorff Latin, Khvostov could manage a little broken Spanish. Toward the end of the meal the conversation was general and merry. Don José's mother, an elderly matron, smiled at everybody and whispered to the attendants; her daughters smiled in well-bred silence.

Not far from Rezanov sat Doña Concepción. She was one of the fifteen children with whom the Arguello family was blessed. As always in the romantic stories of that period, she was only sixteen years old. According to Langsdorff's long-winded report, "Doña Concepción was quite exceptionally distinguished by liveliness, gaiety, by flashing eyes that inspired love, very fine teeth, by expressive, pleasantly formed features, a beautiful figure and a thousand other charms, and by a natural character free from artificiality." In such cases it is the "other charms" that clinch matters. Rezanov looked at the young doña and thought of his desolate youth in the offices of St Petersburg. He thought of the bony shoulders and flat feet of his dear departed wife.

A fortnight passed. The crews feasted, the officers flirted, Langsdorff botanized, and Rezanov prepared the ground for negotiations. He visited all the padres and their mission buildings. He expressed his deep veneration for the Catholic church, from which the Orthodox church differed only in a few idiosyncrasies of form of which he really did not know the exact significance.

He presented to the mission church a magnificent piece of gold brocade, and all the members of the mission received as souvenirs lengths of Orenburg cloth, soft as down.

By the time Arillaga, the Governor of California, arrived, Rezanov had secured the powerful support of the Franciscan fathers. Even more important was the support of the whole family of Commandant Arguello. Don Luis took to target practice an English rifle which Rezanov had given him. The commandant's womenfolk were all dressed in materials Rezanov had presented, beginning with the maids, who went about in Russian cottons, and ending with Doña Concepción, whom the enamoured court chamberlain had draped in Brussels lace and showered with amber, turquoise, and semi-precious stones from the Urals, omitting brilliants only for fear of committing an indiscretion.

Rezanov was entirely open with the Governor. "We need corn," he said. "We could get it from Canton, but California is nearer for us. His Catholic Majesty's possessions in the New World are so extensive that it is extremely difficult to protect them, and the gaining of a loyal ally is a matter of importance to any State." Rezanov suggested that the draft of a commercial treaty should be worked out and everything else left to the diplomats at St Petersburg and Madrid. For the moment he asked no more than to be allowed to sell the goods the *Juno* had brought and to buy corn in exchange.

Arillaga was a man of advanced age. He listened and shook his head. "I have been sixty years," he said, "in the King's service, and I cannot finish by breaking the laws. You know that our colonies are only permitted to carry on foreign trade through the mother-country. There are exceptions, but they are precisely laid down." He did not even allow the *Juno's* cargo to be sold; all that he could concede, as a matter of sheer goodwill, was liberty to buy corn and foodstuffs for cash.

That would have ended the negotiations but for the intervention of Doña Concepción. Count Benyovsky's story of Kamchatka was repeated here in San Francisco Bay—with the difference, indeed, that this time the seducer was the seducee. Day after day Davydov warned Rezanov that it was high time to set sail for home. But Rezanov could not tear himself away. When a man learns for the first time at forty-one years of age what love is, when he has the chance of making good in orange groves all that he has missed at his office desk—then he loses his head, even were he not a chamberlain but the Archimandrite himself. "The business must be brought to a conclusion, it is impossible to hurry it," he replied to Davydov, without looking him in the face. I know the business you mean, thought Davydov.

On the whole, however, Davydov and all the rest were very

content. The crew were having an easy time and enjoying themselves. In the evenings the Russian harmonika was to be heard in the taverns to the accompaniment of the Spanish guitar. All were in love, even the Aleutians. Hunts and balls were arranged. The Spaniards had learnt to dance the "Kazachok"—the Cossack dance—and the Russians the "Barrego." Rezanov was the soul of it all. He was no longer in doubt—Doña Concepción loved him! He proposed to her. She listened, breathless. Then she opened her fan, hid her face behind it—and ran away.

The parents were in a difficult situation. They knew that. Rezanov was a splendid suitor; not every foreigner was announced in advance from Madrid as he had been! They knew that he was frightfully rich, that his possessions somewhere in the north were more extensive than the whole of California. But—he was a heretic!

They consulted the padres, who did not know what to say. The padres liked Rezanov and they knew what they meant to do with him—but in this matter they were faced with other problems. They spent hours talking earnestly to Doña Concepción, they listened as she confessed, they administered communion to her, but—she was in love, and what could the law and the prophets do in face of that?

Rezanov was a diplomat, and so he found a way out. He became betrothed to Doña Concepción, and at the same time the holy fathers sent a petition to Rome for permission to be granted for the marriage. Until the answer came, the betrothal was to be kept secret.

Immediately after the betrothal the negotiations were resumed with the Governor. Doña Concepción took an active share in them, though the Governor had no knowledge of it. The commandant, like all commandants, shared the opinion of his wife and daughter. Soon waggons loaded with grain were making their way from inland to the port, and carts with axes and boots from the port to the town. The Governor declared his acceptance in principle of the setting up of permanent commercial relations with the Russo-American Company, and wrote to Madrid to that effect.

Now it was high time to set sail. Postpone it as he might, Rezanov came at last to the day of parting. The *Junco* fired a salute from all her guns. The Spanish cannon answered from the shore. From the rampart of the fortress Doña Concepción continued for a long time to wave her handkerchief.

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Rezanov gave a full account of everything to Baranov at Novo-Arkhangelsk—of everything except, of course, Doña Concepción. A splendid beginning had been secured. But corn could be bought from other ports. From California they must import their own!

Now Rezanov could have returned to St Petersburg. But he remained still for a while. He was thinking of the Japanese. He determined to urge upon the Japanese the advantages of friendly relations. To this end he sent a small frigate, the *Funona*, under Davydov and Khvostov, with orders to expel the Japanese from Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands.

The officers sailed first to the island of Uterup and then to Sakhalin, which they "annexed"—that is to say, they occupied some Japanese fishing villages and gave the village elders medals and a document to the effect that "the said island is incorporated in the Russian empire."

This little episode had big results. It roused Japanese public opinion and gave the founder of Japanese nationalism, the writer Hirata, the decisive impulse. Five years later a Russian, Captain Golovnin, of the *Diana*, was forced to approach the Japanese shore in order to take in water; he was arrested by the Japanese, and recovered his freedom only with great difficulty three years later. The Japanese showed him the document in which Davydov and Khvostov had declared the union of Sakhalin with Russia.

Golovnin had seen and experienced much in Japan. With four comrades he made an attempt at flight, but was caught and thrown into prison. On his return to Russia he wrote a book showing such capacity for observation and such sound political judgment as would have sufficed for a dozen court chamberlains. A hundred and twenty-five years ago this Russian officer, who had gone through so much in Japan and had barely escaped with his life, wrote this on the Japanese:

"But if a monarch such as our Peter the Great were to rule over this numerous, intelligent, highly-strung, receptive, patient, industrious, and universally gifted people, then, after quite a short space of years, he would bring Japan, with all the resources and treasures in her soil, to the point at which she could dominate the whole eastern ocean. . . . Deep-rooted as is the aversion of the Japanese from all that is foreign, it is quite possible that they might introduce the European Enlightenment among themselves. . . . The attacks from neighbour States suggest the idea of building ships of their own; these ships lead to a navy, and then the success of this measure will probably lead them to have recourse in their turn to our other 'enlightened' means of exterminating the human race; instructors enough would come to them from all Europe if the Japanese only invited them. And consequently it seems to me that we should not annoy this just and honourable people."

Inspired by many new ideas, Rezanov set out for St Petersburg, his heart bursting with love and success. From there he meant to return to new deeds and new happiness in San Francisco. But

at Krasnoyarsk he fell ill—and died, at the very moment when he had been hoping to begin to live.

His reports reached St Petersburg. The board of the Russo-American Company continued to carry on its business. It received from Madrid through diplomatic channels permission to establish factories on the Californian coast north of San Francisco.

Baranov took upon himself the setting up of the factories. Two years later he sent two ships under the command of Kuzkov to the Californian coast. In the estuary of the Columbia river some of Kuzkov's men were captured by Indians. They did not get back to Novo-Arkhangelsk till two years later.

Kuzkov himself wintered in Bodega Bay, explored the neighbourhood, smoked pipes of peace with the Indians, killed two thousand beavers, and returned to Baranov.

In the following year three ships went hunting in Bodega Bay. And the year after that Kuzkov acquired from the Indian chieftains for the Russo-American Company the valley of a river that flows into the ocean a little north of Bodega Bay. It is now called Russian river.

A year later Kuzkov came again, with building materials, and proceeded to erect a fort. On August 30, 1812, Saint Alexander's Day, the day on which at the other end of the world the Russian troops withdrew from Smolensk as Napoleon captured the city, ten cannon of the new "Ross" fort thundered a salute to the Russian Emperor.

The old Governor Arillaga died soon after the building of Fort Ross. Don Arguello was appointed in his place. He moved with his family to Monterey. Doña Concepción went with the rest. She was still waiting for Rezanov. But no news came from him. Later her father was transferred to Central America. She went there with him—and now it was entirely impossible to hear of her betrothed.

She was still beautiful. The "Star of California" had as many suitors as the sands of the sea. The holy fathers had long freed her from her pledged word. Her parents told her that her betrothed must have broken faith. But she did not believe it, and remained true to him. After the death of her parents she returned to California and entered a nunnery. Thirty-six years after taking the veil, the venerable nun learned by chance from an American traveller of her lover's death. She had been right: he had not broken faith.

The little autocrat of Russian America was still at his Novo-Arkhangelsk. Several times he had asked to be allowed to retire. But he was still waiting for relief. Two successors had been sent, but, one after the other, they had been drowned on the way.

Such is human fate—no one knows where he is destined to

perish. The friends Davydov and Khvostov, heroes of Sakhalin, who had passed safely through the stormiest and most dangerous waters in the world, returned to St Petersburg on leave, and on one of the "white nights" of the north, when they were rowing on the Neva, they were drowned—thirty yards from the shore.

The waves did not engulf Baranov. At seventy he was just the same—noisy, passionate, incalculable. He had given his daughter in marriage to a naval officer; his Indian wife had died. He was a martyr to rheumatism, but he still worked twenty hours a day; for the remaining four he listened to his favourite songs and swilled rum.

Meanwhile Ross continued to grow. Round the fort were the huts of Russian settlers and of Aleutians brought from Alaska. Great hemp plantations extended along the shore; ropes and hawsers were made from the hemp in Ross, and readily bought up by the English captains. In Bodega Bay a port had been laid out; not far from it great granaries were erected, and a shipyard built, and mills, workshops, sheds, smitheries, bath-houses. They are all described by the German poet and botanist Adelbert von Chamisso, author of the immortal *Schlemihl*: in 1817 he visited Fort Ross with a party of Russians with whom he was making a tour of the world.

Baranov's ocean empire stretched now from Bodega Bay to Bering Straits. He ruled it from Novo-Arkhangelsk. The foreign trade of Novo-Arkhangelsk was greater than that of San Francisco. Baranov made special articles for the Pacific trade: he founded bells for the Catholic churches of Mexico! He possessed the biggest fleet on the west coast of America.

His ships sailed to and fro between the two shores of the Pacific. The Viceroy of Peru knew him as well as the Governor of the Hudson Bay Company. And the ruler of the Sandwich Islands, Emperor Kamehameha I, sent him greetings as from one potentate to another. The "Emperor of Alaska" had sent one of his captains, Hagemeister, to him in 1808. "Meitei-meitei!" said Emperor Kamehameha when he heard that the ship that had arrived was neither English nor Spanish but Russian. His chamberlain Crymakoo, who instead of the ribbon of an order wore a necklace of shark's teeth, interpreted the remark as "Splendid!" The Emperor received a red cloak and the chamberlain a penknife, and Hagemeister returned to Novo-Arkhangelsk with a cargo of taro roots, maize, and sugar-cane.

In 1814 Baranov sent his friend the American Captain Bennett to his friend Emperor Kamehameha. But Bennett was unfortunate. His ship was wrecked on Kauai Island, and King Tomari, though a vassal of the friendly emperor, claimed as his prize everything Bennett had been able to save.



The idea of a punitive expedition was tempting. Bennett, on his return to Novo-Arkhangelsk, urged it. But Baranov did not want to quarrel with the Sandwich Emperor. He had other ideas. In 1815 he sent a new expedition, under Dr Scheffer, a German, who had been police surgeon in Moscow and had taken part in a tour of the world as ship's doctor. Scheffer had fallen out with his commanding officer and had taken refuge with Baranov. Baranov was warned against the doctor, but took no notice. "A German—a man to be trusted," he thought.

Dr Scheffer received from King Tomari a concession for a plantation and settlement. Tomari even agreed to compensate the company for the goods taken from Bennett. On this Scheffer suggested to him to overthrow the rightful Emperor Kamehameha, to place on his own head the tin can crown with black pearls, and to transfer to Dr Scheffer, in return for services rendered in the matter, the whole island of Kauai.

Scheffer began by organizing King Tomari's army and fleet. He bought two old American schooners, paying five thousand dollars in cash for one out of the funds of the company; for the other he paid by a cheque on Novo-Arkhangelsk, payable in furs.

Meanwhile he built a fort and planted maize and sugar-cane. Emperor Kamehameha, however, with the aid of Englishmen and Americans, forced submission on Tomari and himself fell upon Dr Scheffer. After a siege and a battle the doctor tried to flee on board his frigate, but he suffered shipwreck near the coast. He and his crew swam ashore, but succeeded only in reaching—Hawaii prison.

Four years passed before the liberation of the crew was secured by Baranov. Dr Scheffer had gained his liberty earlier. He managed to reach Canton and went direct to St Petersburg. There he at once made the proposal that the Sandwich Islands should be occupied; this plan was rejected. He then went to Brazil, where he was given by Emperor Dom Pedro I the title of Count von Frankenthal for services rendered, and was commissioned to recruit soldiers in Germany for the Brazilian army. The "Count" was given an advance, went to Germany—and was seen in Brazil no more.

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At last Baranov's petitions were acceded to by St Petersburg. He was permitted to retire. He himself nominated Captain Hagemeister as his successor. In 1818 he transferred his stocks and accounts to Hagemeister. Everything was in perfect order. In twenty-eight years of absolute power over a gigantic colony Baranov had not accumulated as much as every little "chieftain" in Siberia usually took with him on retirement.

On November 27, 1818, he went on board his ship and looked

for the last time on his island. On the shore stood a great crowd. All were sorry to part from the uncontrolled, irascible man, kindly and rough, cruel and tender, who had feared nothing, had taken all responsibility upon himself, had admitted his errors and forgiven the oversights of others. The ship sailed for Batavia. On April 16, 1819, Baranov died on board and was buried in the Indian Ocean.

His proud dream of a Russian Pacific empire based on Okhotsk, Novo-Arkhangelsk, Ross, and Hawaii, was not to be realized. His dream of the Sandwich Islands had been destroyed by the "reliable" Dr Scheffer. But even the Ross colony came to nothing, though it might have had a chance. When Mexico seceded from Spain in 1823 the Mexicans were ready to make great concessions to Russia in return for her recognition of their independence. Just at that time the Lazarev expedition came, in the course of its tour of the world, to San Francisco.

Lazarev was a sea-dog with no interest in high policy. One of his officers, however, Lieutenant Savalishin, was passionately interested in it. He realized the political situation at once, and began to negotiate with the Governor of California for the cession of Northern California to Russia. In return for this he promised Russian recognition, and he pointed out the strategic importance to the new Government of a Russian "buffer" between Mexico and the United States. The Governor listened attentively.

Savalishin told his comrade Lieutenant Putyatin about his plan. Putyatin was himself interested in high policy, but he pronounced the plan Utopian.

In St Petersburg Savalishin's project aroused the interest not only of the company but of the Government. The young lieutenant had thought out the driving of a wedge between the United States and Mexico, and he induced not only the Mexican but the Russian Government to give serious consideration to the idea!

Soon after this, however, Alexander I died, and the "dawn" of the Dekabrists rose over St Petersburg. When Nicholas I issued his fiat in the matter, Savalishin was in solitary confinement in a casemate. The Tsar flatly refused to recognize a State which had arisen from a revolution against the legitimate Spanish king.

Was Nicholas right? Was he right in renouncing a rich new colony, in destroying Baranov's magnificent dream, for the sake of an abstract principle of legitimism, that is to say for the sake of another dream, only a less magnificent one? But the issue was not so simple as that. Public opinion in America had already been disturbed by the Russian penetration into the New World. The decree of the Russian Government prohibiting foreign ships from approaching within a hundred miles of Alaska and the Aleutians in the pursuit of marine fauna had already called forth an energetic protest from the American Government. When the Holy Alliance

refused to recognize the independence of Mexico and entrusted France with the restoration of the "legitimate order," President Monroe sent a message to the Congress of the United States, in which he declared that the American Government recognized the existing possessions in America of European States, but would not countenance any new ones. This was the famous Monroe Doctrine, which has formed the basis of American foreign policy from that day to this. It was a plain warning to Russia; to ignore it and grasp at California would have meant war with the United States, and that would have meant the immediate loss of Alaska and probably also of Kamchatka.

Obviously Putyatín had been the better politician of the two lieutenants. Tsar Nicholas could not have countenanced a hopeless war for the sake of Savalishin's Utopian dream. No, in this case we cannot blame the Tsar.

From this time on, however, the Russo-American Company's interest in California dwindled. Ross produced too little to justify the expense of its maintenance. Grain must still be bought, as before, in San Francisco or Santiago. It was cheaper to import it from there than to maintain a whole colony.

In 1841 Ross was sold. It was bought by a German-Swiss, Johann August Sutter, the "Emperor of California," on whose property the discovery was made seven years later of the first gold in western America.

This sale was the prelude to another which took place twenty-six years later. The frontiers of Alaska as we know them today were delimited in 1824 and 1825 by treaties with Great Britain and the United States. Alaska seemed firmly held by Russia. But it was not so for long. The Crimean War showed the Government that it was unable to give protection to those distant possessions. The fur trade was no longer proving remunerative. Nobody yet dreamed of Alaska's mineral resources. The geologists sent from St Petersburg reported the presence of gold, but in such inconsiderable quantities and at such inaccessible spots that it was not worth attention. Nobody then dreamed that there was gold in the sands of the shore, directly opposite the Russian coast. Nor did anyone dream of the coal of Alaska, or its tin and copper. In 1867 the Russian Government sold Alaska for 7,200,000 dollars—one-sixth of the amount the United States receives every year from the Alaskan fisheries.

So ended the work which Shelekhov and his wife Natalia had begun with the collaboration of Baranov and Rezanov. They were all true Russians, simple people with a mysterious impulse to push far afield. They were traders, conquerors, dreamers. They knew the law of life—"Take what has not been taken already"—and were its servants.

# DREAMS

## Chapter 22

### LAND OF EXILE

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WITH incredible speed the frontier of Siberia had moved eastwards, as though automatically: it had not even stopped at the ocean. What had been going on meanwhile in the country itself?

Siberia had already been for a long time a penal colony.

The old Russia had known nothing of banishment. Undesirable elements had been segregated, as among many other peoples, but they had not been driven out of the country. If in the eyes of their contemporaries they were specially guilty, they were executed. Moscow had long followed this immemorial Russian system. But when Siberia had been conquered the Government began to make use of criminals as material for colonization.

From the beginning of the annexation of Siberia no one in Russia had been safe from banishment. Not a single person! The common people were driven on foot along the roads; the rich aristocrats were sent in peasants' carts, sometimes even in coaches. Later all classes were transported by rail. There was no special legislation for political criminals.

Through three hundred years men and women were driven to Siberia, on foot or in conveyances, in the name of the Tsar. What a tragic circumstance that one of these people was the last Russian Tsar himself!

Moscow was not without criminal laws. Many crimes in the code were punishable with banishment. If, for instance, a thief was caught, the sentence for the first offence was flogging with the knout, cutting off of the left ear, imprisonment in chains for two years, and—banishment to Siberia.

The knout and Siberia were the penalties in the seventeenth century for people who "played cards, but stole after losing at cards, and stabbed, plundered, and uncapped people on the highway." Still worse was the fate of tobacco-smokers. What happened to them after the first or the second conviction is not stated; but if they persisted in their immoral habit and went on smoking they were tortured and flogged with the knout "more than once"; then their nostrils were slit, or, alternatively, their noses cut off, and finally they were sent as colonists to Siberia, obviously because it was considered that young men thus beautified

would make good matches there and would produce a healthy and numerous progeny.

Men were also sent to Siberia for murder committed when drunk, and for "disseminating unrest among the people"; for causing fires through negligence; for begging for alms "under false pretences" (with arms or legs bound or with eyes rolling or blinking to suggest blindness or purblindness); for "pulling at the reins"—which today sounds incomprehensible; in the old days in Moscow the coachman rode on the horse's back or ran alongside, holding the bridle. If he sat on the front seat and pulled at the reins he was regarded as guilty of cruelty to animals, and such cruel and heartless people were flogged and sent to Siberia. Also anyone who accidentally knocked down a pregnant woman was sent there.

It is easy to understand the origin of the old Russian saying, "Thou shalt not conjure up prison or the beggar's scrip." The only remarkable thing is that it makes no mention of the knout, with which it was just as easy for anybody to make acquaintance. In the reign of Catherine II a French abbé, Chappe d'Auteroche, went to Siberia in order to make astronomical observations. On his return to Paris in 1770 he published a big book on Russia. With apparent enjoyment he described the various sorts of flogging. He approaches the obscene in his descriptions of the proceedings with women victims. He talks of fourteen-year-old girls with "forms already fairly developed" and women "with voluptuous forms." He gives a particularly vivid description, though only from hearsay, of the public flogging with the knout of the young aristocrat Lopukhina, maid-of-honour to the Empress Elizabeth and a famous beauty. She had been charged with participation in intrigues and in a conspiracy. The executioner roughly tore down her dress, and then he wrenched the delicate chemise from her shoulders. Her pink and white back was bared to the waist; with a movement of modesty she covered her enchanting bosom. Her hair fell over the satin skin of her shoulders. Then the knout whistled in the air.

The learned abbé was shocked and deeply distressed—especially at his failure to be present.

A normal knouting consisted of fifty, a hundred, or two hundred blows. There were even cases in which the figure was higher still, though only when it was really intended to beat the victim to death. But nobody could suffer even the ordinary dose without serious injury to his internal organs, unless the knout had been "greased"—that is to say, the executioner had been bribed. Consequently it was absolutely essential to have the executioner on one's side. These virtuosi of the knout knew how to use it in such a way that red weals made their appearance while in reality

the knout had only touched the skin, and had not even caused serious pain. None the less the victim groaned and screamed, as arranged beforehand. Prisoners were punished with the knout for breaches of discipline or infringements of the regulations. In every cell the prisoners taxed themselves. In this way they created their "artel" ("co-operative"), a special fund out of which the executioner was bribed before every beating.

Banishment was a universal penalty in Russia; everybody was liable to it, and not only human beings but animals and even things without life. Ivan the Terrible ordered the execution of an elephant which the Shah of Persia had sent him, because the animal refused to bend the knee to him. His son Theodore sent a bell to Siberia because it had pealed when his brother Dmitri, the little heir to the throne, was assassinated in the town of Uglich. The boyar Boris Godunov had instigated the crime in order to get rid of a rival. And in 1592 he induced Theodore to banish the bell and all whom its peal had summoned—in other words, the whole population of the town. These were the first political exiles in Siberia. There, in the north, between the Ob and the Urals, they built the town of Pelym, one of the first Russian towns in Siberia.

The bell was sent to Tobolsk. Before its banishment it was also punished by its "ears" being cut off and its "cheeks" knocked off. It is said that its tongue was also torn out, but later the criminal was to some extent reinstated; new ears were welded to it and a new tongue hung in it, and it was still striking the hours when in this city, in the house of a merchant named Ipatyev, the exiled Tsar Nicholas II and his family came to their end.

The masses of exiled "common people" were beyond all count. In the course of the seventeenth century Siberia became full of persons exiled in consequence of various rebellions. Sometimes these were purely local risings, sometimes immense movements of revolt that shook the throne. In 1648 there was starvation in Moscow—there was neither bread nor salt. A mob plundered and murdered the traders and speculators; then it howled against the Tsar's officials. Two of them were condemned to death to satisfy the people. On the way to execution they were wrenched from their guards by the mob and torn to pieces. When the people had been satiated with blood and with the urgently procured bread, the police began making arrests. Along Vladimir Street long columns of flogged and mutilated victims were marched away to Siberia.

In the following year there were similar revolts in the north, at Ustyug and at Solvychevodsk. There was any quantity of salt there, but no bread. The greedy hoarders of bread were sent to Siberia.

A year after that, the Government was required to make

payment in corn of part of the indemnity due to the Swedes for the war that had been lost to them. The corn-dealers speculated, and the price of bread rose enormously. At Novgorod and at Pskov there were serious disturbances. They were suppressed, and those agitators who were not executed migrated to Siberia.

In 1662, during the war with Poland and Sweden, there was a "copper inflation." The coinage grew worse and worse, the prices better and better. There were riots in Moscow; the crowd marched to the Tsar's palace outside Moscow and threatened to storm it. The riot was suppressed; blood flowed in streams. In Vladimir Street the iron chains clanked.

In 1670-71 came the rising of Stepan Razin, the heroic Don Cossack whose deeds are sung in the "Song of the Volga Boatmen," which is ground out to this day on the hurdy-gurdies even in France and England. The rising extended through the whole of the Volga region. How many were then exiled to Siberia, after Razin himself had been drawn and quartered in Moscow, nobody can say: they were not counted.

Risings and revolts on the Don, in the Ukraine, in regions of the Volga—Don Cossacks, Zaporog Cossacks, Volga Cossacks, Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Bashkirs, Cheremisses . . .

Then began the religious persecutions. In the second half of the seventeenth century the Russian church was afflicted by schism: on one side were those who had accepted the new official statutes, the new revision of the prayer book; on the other those who rejected them, the "Old Believers." The faith was the same, the only differences were in a few details of the rites, in the chanting of the prayers. On account of these differences there flowed tears beyond measure, unquenchable streams of blood—and the columns of exiles to Siberia were unending.

The "Old Believers" were supporters of the existing order and rejected "new usages." And they not only stood firmly for their convictions but laid their heads on the block for them. Avvakum, pope of Moscow, was exiled to Dauria, by the Amur. He was flogged, tortured, and for twelve years afflicted and tormented—and never once did he deny his faith, although the cock crowed many times after nights of torture and humiliation.

A follower of his, Morosova, wife of a boyar, a wealthy and radiantly beautiful maid-of-honour, declared herself an "Old Believer." The authorities reasoned with her, tried to intimidate her, sent her away from court; then her property was confiscated. Then she and her sister, Princess Urussova, were put into prison: they were branded, flogged "unmercifully with five whips turn by turn on the back and the belly"; they were thrown into a dungeon in which they were devoured by vermin and suffocated by the stench.

One single word was all that was demanded of them. Instead of "No" they were to say "Yes." They were even promised that after that they should be free to pray as they liked. They preferred to die under torture.

The "Old Believers" were exiled to Siberia in masses. To this day wide regions in Transbaikalia and in the Altai mountains are entirely populated by their descendants. These tall, strong, fair-haired people are famous for the beauty of their women and for their wealth. They held fast to their "old usages"; in the past they neither drank nor smoked; they acquired their wealth as the Quakers did in America. But they are only remnants of the masses of their people who were banished to Siberia in the course of a century and a half. They had fled and hid themselves in the forests; even there they were denounced by the Government's informers. When they saw no other resource left, they locked themselves into their chapels and set fire to them. They sang psalms until smoke and flames overcame them.

Even a century later the "Old Believers" continued their self-immolation. They sought death by burning in solitude, in family groups, in crowds, in whole villages. About the middle of the eighteenth century energetic measures were adopted against these "schismatics," who had remained in hiding in the forests; they were searched out and haled before the Consistory. In reply there died in 1751, in the neighbourhood of Chelyabinsk, 189 people who had decided on a voluntary death by fire. In 1756 a further 165 people suffered the same fate, and in March 1757 over a hundred.

The last such case of self-immolation happened in Siberia in 1823. A farmer named Myatlev, who had already sent many people to the fire, ultimately decided to "purify" himself. He took his children and grandchildren into the cellar of their home, and set fire to it. The children's screams and the smoke brought the neighbours, and all were brought out. The old man ended his days in the "katorga," the convict prison, in chains in a dark cell. For the rest of his life he saw no more fire.

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Thus people were condemned to the katorga who had tried to burn themselves alive. Clearly it was considered that this punishment was worse than death by fire—and with very good reason.

The word "katorga" came from Byzantium. *Τὸ κάτεργον* (*to katargon*) means in the Greek of the Septuagint "work," and in Byzantium it meant "the galley"—a vessel rowed by criminals. These were the galleys with which we are familiar in Roman history, and which later were used by Spain and France.

Peter the Great constructed many great works—ports, canals,



fortresses, factories. He needed labour. Why not make use of the unpaid labour of men who could not be made use of in any other way? Peter exiled them and used them for the building of ports. Azov, St Petersburg, the canals between Volga and Neva—all these were built over the dead bodies of convicts.

Later the katorga was transplanted to Siberia.

At the outset of the eighteenth century, under Peter the Great, a beginning was made with the working of the veins of zinc and silver beyond Lake Baikal. Then iron began to be mined and smelted; the only deposits of tin in Russia were discovered there; salt-works and distilleries were established.

A desolate country, covered with dense forests and cut through by deep, rushing rivers. Zigzagging mountain ranges, strange and gloomy, like ocean waves turned into stone by some enchantment; there are no others like them. And on these waves were the galleys, turned to stone by a like enchantment, of the katorga.

They slipped unmoving through the centuries into eternity. The chained oarsmen rowed in frozen earth. Silver flowed into the Tsar's treasury; tears and blood trickled over the soil.

A katorga of the first order was the one at Nerchinsk, the most frightful and desolate of all. There were also milder varieties—factories and industrial works. There criminals were more or less well looked after, for they had to be trained to the work, and to sacrifice them after that would not have been advantageous. But in the mines anyone could work. Unceasingly men were brought to them and unceasingly carried out again, a *perpetuum mobile*. The work never stopped.

After the death of Peter the Great, silver and copper were discovered in the Altai mountains. Criminals began to be sent thither. Like the mines at Nerchinsk in Transbaikalia, the Kolyvan works on the Altai supplied silver for the mint at St Petersburg. The splendid shining coins showed the effigies of splendid Tsars and Tsaritsas. Peter the Great's idea had been carried out—the criminals received their due punishment and in the process contributed to the splendour and greatness of the Tsarist dynasty.

They did so more than ever after the whole mining area of Nerchinsk and part of the Altai region had been declared the private property of the Tsar's family. But since the employment of criminals had its limits, peasants were "allocated" to the works—serfs of His Imperial Majesty—to perform the same forced labour, though innocent of any crime.

The peasants did at least go home and not into prison at the end of the day, and they were not in chains. Some of them were required to undertake farm labour, in order to provide food for the katorga. Thus the peasants lived better than the convicts. Yet they envied them, for most of the criminals were sentenced

for fixed terms, but the peasants were condemned to forced labour for life. And the same labour became in due time the portion of their children and grandchildren.

Thus the *katorga* of the "first order" came to be outclassed by another of the "very first order." Alongside the men who had still a ray of hope left there were others from whom even that ray was taken.

When the convict had completed his sentence in the *katorga* he was set free, to settle and thus swell the ranks of the exiled. The more the Government became interested in the colonization of Siberia, the more did it send exiles and convicts thither.

They went segregated, but with a common destiny. And here was one more of the cruel paradoxes of Siberia: on the way thither the convicts, the prisoners condemned to forced labour, were bound hand and foot by ordinary shackles, in which it was possible, though painfully, at least to make progress. But the less guilty among the prisoners, those condemned simply to exile, were forged to the "prut." This was an iron rod to which short chains ending in iron clasps were fastened. Each rod had six or eight such chains, for three or four "pairs." The clasps were fastened round the arms of the prisoners and locked on. The keys were kept in the haversack of the escorting non-commissioned officer. The haversack was sealed before starting, and only the commandant at the next stage had the right to break the seal.

Thus, no one could undo the lock on the way. Six or eight people were bound together in an iron bond. If one of them broke down and could walk no farther, the rest must drag him along. If one of them had to stop still, the rest must stop with him. The escort had no time to choose suitable comrades for each rod. Men and women were shackled together, the healthy and the diseased, old men and youths, giants and dwarfs.

In this way thousands of prisoners came every week to the Moscow prisons and were sent on to Siberia. How many of the "criminals" were insane or invalids or innocent persons? Of the answer only those can have any conception who have some little knowledge of the methods of procedure of the courts of those days.

The Russian people knew those methods. And because they knew them they were always on the side of the sentenced and never on that of the judges. The people regarded the judges as executioners, the criminals as—"Unfortunates." This attitude to the courts can be traced throughout Russian history. It explains many things.

## Chapter 23

### WEALS HEAL: PRAYERS ENDURE

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THE Russian attitude toward the "Unfortunates" found expression, by a strange chance, in the person and the life's work of a German, Dr Friedrich Joseph Haas.

With his German thoroughness and his German accent, with the theology of Jena and a doctor's diploma from Vienna, he became a popular Russian saint, the friend of the Unfortunates and the patron saint of the Siberian convicts.

He was twenty-two years old when he came to Moscow. As a young ophthalmic surgeon in Vienna he had cured a Russian grandee, the aged Prince Repnin. Repnin would not part from his doctor. "Come to Moscow," he said to him; "with your talent and your intelligence you will earn fame and wealth there."

Haas won both, and very quickly. He became the highest authority in Moscow on diseases of the eye. After a few years' residence in the city he was appointed medical director of a great hospital.

He visited his patients in his own carriage, drawn by four white horses. Near Moscow was a cloth-manufacturing mill that belonged to him. He travelled for the Government to the Caucasus, where he investigated the mineral springs and prepared the first scientific work about them.

For his services at the hospital he was awarded the Order of St Vladimir. He gave up this work in 1812; a year later he entered the army as a military surgeon; he was with the Russian troops before Paris. On his way back to Russia he visited his birthplace, Münstereifel; he arrived just in time to bid farewell to his dying father. He breathed again the air of his beloved Rhenish homeland. There he had round him all that his soul desired—the Rhine, his relatives, German cleanliness, and Catholic godliness.

He left it all, to return to ungentle, unwashed, unhappy Russia. Why? To earn fame and wealth?

His fame and wealth continued to increase in Moscow. Patients came from other cities to visit him. Eminent specialists called him in as a consultant. He acquired a house of his own.

That was in the eighteen-twenties. The Governor of Moscow at that time was Prince Golitsyn, a general with a long record of honourable service, and one of the wealthiest, most distinguished, and most cultured men in Russia. As Governor it was his duty to send persons to prison. As a Russian he regarded them in his

own mind and conscience as Unfortunates. He determined to found a trust for the supervision of the Moscow prison system.

The trust was formed in 1828. Dr Haas was unanimously elected as its secretary. At the same time he was appointed chief medical officer of the Moscow prisons. He held both offices to the end of his life.

On the first day of his new appointment he began a heroic campaign against the prut, the iron rod to which prisoners were chained in groups. He carried it on through the trust; he approached the authorities, the Ministers, the Tsar himself. From the Tsar he received no reply. He then wrote a letter to King Frederick William IV of Prussia, explained to him what the prut was, and besought the King to transmit the contents of the letter to the King's sister, wife of Tsar Nicholas. In this roundabout way he hoped to gain access to the heart of the Tsar.

But there was no access to the Tsar's heart. Apart from that, the King had other cares.

Only after years of persistent agitation was a small concession wrung from the authorities: the iron rod was replaced by a chain. In 1832, on the order of the Government, 4,702 chains were made, each to take three pairs of prisoners—enough in all for 28,212 persons.

The chief evil of the prut was not removed by the chain—different sorts of people were still chained together. But the change from the rigid rod to the movable chain brought immense relief. And Dr Haas's name was blessed.

The doctor did not rest content with that. It was the practice to make the iron bands narrow, so as to clasp the arms and legs of the prisoners as tightly as possible; otherwise, by a super-human effort, it would have been possible to wrest the limbs free of them. The iron bands galled, rubbed, ate into the flesh. Haas secured the fitting of a leather lining.

This change was instituted by the order of the central authority. The lesser authorities failed to see the need for it, and even felt insulted by it. "That sentimental German!" said the commandants, "the hysterical philanthropist!"

The "philanthropist" went on with his work. He concerned himself with the convicts' shackles. These were chains that fettered hands and feet. They weighed  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  pounds. Haas did not succeed in getting the shape of the fetters changed—in Russia it would have been easier to alter the form of government. But he worked on the fetters alone in his house, and in consultation with the prison smiths, until he had reduced their weight almost by half without changing their shape or their rigidity. That done, he began, on his own responsibility, and at the risk of being made

to wear the irons himself, to exchange the convicts' fetters as the columns came to Moscow.

The columns of prisoners came to a prison on the outskirts of Moscow. Before they left, the doctor visited the prison. He went now in a little trap—the carriage with the four white horses had gone. The prisoners were waiting for him. "There's Fyodor Petrovich!" they cried. The leaders of the escort looked suspiciously at the stocky elderly gentleman, obviously a foreigner, in frock-coat, white waistcoat, and cuffs, with knee-breeches, black silk stockings, and buckled shoes—a costume that seemed more suitable for an audience with Catherine II than for the dispatch of convicts. This well-groomed foreigner went with a smile from one to another of the grey, care-worn, verminous mass of captives, and shook hands with them, clapped them on the shoulder, embraced them, gave a little money to one and a little medicine to another.

He extended the smitheries out of his own resources, and brought in additional smiths to change the prisoners' shackles. He lightened the shackles by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  pounds. To measure the immensity of the change, that  $2\frac{1}{2}$  pounds must be multiplied by the thousands of miles of desolate migration on foot and by tens, by hundreds of thousands of unhappy human lives.

So the philanthropist went resolutely on his way, throwing over all the regulations and customs, in haste to do good. "Haste to do good," he said also to others. They listened, and even did as he said—only without haste. Then he got tired of waiting, and himself did what he considered to be right. For a long time he begged and implored that the means should be supplied for the improvement of the food of the prisoners. Finally he lost patience and himself allocated eleven thousand roubles to that purpose "in the name of an unknown donor."

That was his whole property. The "unknown" person's cloth-manufacturing mill had to close down.

On December 21, 1839, the "Christmas contingent" was being sent on, as due, to Siberia. Two young girls, sisters, appealed, bathed in tears, to Haas. One of them was ill and could no longer walk. The other was ill but could still walk. The commandant of the contingent had decided to send one forward and keep back the other. "If she insists on remaining with her sister she must walk as well as she can."

Haas hurried to the commandant. He put forward every argument he could, urged, implored, threatened. But the commandant refused to budge. He said he knew his instructions, knew them by heart. He did not admit that any cruelty was being done, and for his part he claimed that logic was on his side. "The circumstance that a couple of sisters are both criminals gives

them no right to special treatment," he said, looking hard at Haas. "If one sister acts criminally, she is torn from her family and sent alone to Siberia."

The doctor's features twitched; his face grew purple. He threw open his fur coat, threw out his breast with the ribbon of his Order, and shouted at the officer:

"Give me your name! I will report it to His Majesty the Tsar."

The officer shrugged his shoulders. "Colonel Müller. His Majesty will not alter his instructions for that!"

"*Müller? Wie, Müller?*" the old man gasped. His round, bright blue eyes filled with tears. He grasped the officer's hand and said to him in their native German: "Listen, Müller, no matter about His Majesty, I didn't mean that. . . . There is another Lord over us, and He will ask us all how we have fulfilled *His* instructions."

"I must ask you not to interfere with discipline," replied Colonel Müller icily. "This is not the place for lectures on the Catechism." And turning to his adjutant he roared: "Leave them both here! Into hospital—to the doctor."

Dr Haas brought the prisoners gifts he had himself collected. He distributed bread, fruit, medicine, clothing among them. He consoled them with the Word of God. He was the first, since Russian prisons had existed, to provide copies of the New Testament for the exiles. To prevent the little books from being lost or falling to pieces, he had devised special bags with locks, which he hung about the captives' necks.

When the Unfortunates went on their way, he had not the heart to separate from them. Along the dismal streets in the outskirts of Moscow there strode beside the long gaunt procession an old man in a frock-coat, his cross of Saint Vladimir in his buttonhole, an old man in long stockings and old-fashioned buckled shoes. In winter a wolfskin covered all this Catherinian splendour. Fyodor Petrovich, the "saintly doctor" and man of God, was seeing his friends off.

The eighteen-fifties had come. Nicholas ruled over Russia. His leaden, lifeless gaze rested on the wide, wide snowfields. Over them there was nothing to be heard in the icy silence but the clank, clank of chains.

Dr Haas was seventy years old. More than ever he was in haste to do good. He had long given up his private practice. He had long been without his coach, his factory, his own house. He did all that he had the strength to do in order to lighten the material sufferings of the Unfortunates. But his life's experience had taught him that the material cannot be conquered by the material alone.

In the prison trust of which Haas was the secretary the chair

was often taken by Filaret, Metropolitan of Moscow. He was the most famous and the most influential of the Russian prelates, a man of keen intelligence and strong will, with influence even over the Tsar and his Ministers. He was the exponent of Russian Orthodoxy, and his constant collaboration with the Catholic Haas must have seemed strange to many people.

The doctor's unending petitions on behalf of innocent persons who had been sentenced became an annoyance to the trust. In twenty years of his secretaryship Haas had made a hundred and forty-two requests that the trust should petition the Government to re-examine cases of "innocence." Many of the "innocent" persons turned out to be in fact criminals who had deceived the "man of God."

"You are always talking of innocent persons who have been condemned, Fyodor Petrovich," said Filaret. "There are none. When anyone has been sentenced he is never free from guilt."

Haas jumped up from his seat. "Your Eminence, you have forgotten Jesus Christ!" he exclaimed, pointing to a dark Byzantine figure that hung in a corner of the room.

There was a long pause, a general embarrassed silence. Never before had the all-powerful Filaret been addressed in that style. Haas stood silently; slowly he let his arm fall, his flaming blue eyes still fixed reproachfully and appealingly on the Metropolitan.

Filaret sat with head bent. Then he stood up and said:

"No, Fyodor Petrovich! It is not I who have forgotten Jesus Christ. He has forgotten me!"

And with bent head he went out.

Haas's sphere of activities remained unchanged through the years. But the depth and devotion of his spiritual heroism grew always. He had completely forgotten his own needs; impoverished and shabby, he was now literally indistinguishable from his Unfortunates. Often, when there was no room in the prison hospital, he would take patients to his own dwelling. If a patient had no shirt on him, he gave him his own. The "unknown person" no longer had any money for himself. Good people looked after the doctor. They brought him the things he needed; while he was with them they quietly manœuvred money into the back pocket of his frock-coat.

Cholera came to Moscow. Haas took cholera patients to his home and tended them. There was panic in the prison hospital; he went into the cholera ward, went up to the first sufferer, blessed him, sat down on his bed, took his hand, and kissed him.

The doctor was a saint; prisoners knew it for certain. The whole of the common people of Moscow knew it. And they were right. His life was one long act of self-sacrifice and love, and God lent him the power to perform miracles.

One day Nicholas I inspected Moscow prison. Haas knelt to him and implored him to pardon a criminal who, he declared, was innocent. The Tsar was of a different opinion—but he pardoned the man. That was a miracle. “And (they) were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak” (Mark vii. 37).

Fame had come for Haas, universal, genuine fame. One icy night he was going through the crooked lanes of Moscow to a poor patient. He was on foot. From a dark corner three rogues pounced on him to rob him. Wasting few words, they pulled at his wolfskin coat. Haas was not alarmed; nor did he attempt to defend himself. “Friends,” he said, “I need my fur, it keeps me warm on my way to the poor sick people.”

“Go on, go on, pull it off, no palaver!” they replied. “We want to get warm ourselves.”

At once the old man forgot that they were out to rob him. He had but one thought—that these men, too, were freezing.

“I’ll find some warm clothes for you, friends. Come to me in the morning — to the hospital over there — just ask for Dr Haas.”

“Little Father Fyodor Petrovich!” was the answer he heard. “But why didn’t you tell us at once? Who do you think would touch you? Come, come, we’ll go with you; there are low people about here!”

It may be that all this is just pious legend! We should offer no opposition to that view. We need legends, and we know that only truth creates them. But in this case even the friends of the factual and the precise may be at ease. Everything here told has been set down by Haas’s biographer, and he was an expert in the judgment of witnesses’ statements and in the critical assessment of documents. A. F. Koni, who wrote the *Life of Haas*, was the most brilliant of the public prosecutors of Tsarist Russia, a caustic speaker, a stern prosecutor, and later a judge famed for his fairness.

To him we may give credence. He tested every document and examined the living witnesses of the doctor’s deeds with all the art of an experienced jurist. One of these witnesses, a Professor at Moscow University, had this story to tell:

A little peasant girl, eleven years old, was left one day at the university clinic. She had a terrible disease, a special form of cancer which had eaten away half her face, with one eye and part of the nose. The decomposing tissues gave out such a terrible stench that neither the doctors nor the matron nor the child’s own mother could endure it.

Fyodor Petrovich happened to hear of the child. For three days in succession he visited her, stopped hours with her, hugged



her, kissed her, and gave her his blessing. On the fourth day she died, in his arms.

The good doctor died on August 16, 1853. The convicts begged the prison chaplain to pray for their doctor. The frightened "pope" did not venture to do so without orders—Haas was a Catholic. He went to Filaret to ask permission.

"What a question!" said Filaret. "Hurry off and pray that he will speak a good word in the other world for you and me."

And Filaret himself hurried to the death-chamber of his old colleague and opponent.

When the saint was carried to his grave, all Moscow followed his coffin. The rich and gentle drove, the poor and simple went on foot. The prisoners took no part in the burial, but the police took a very active part. They had to do so, not only because so many people were astir but because the man of God was buried at the expense of the police. All he left behind him was a New Testament and an old telescope—nothing more.

When he came home from his Unfortunates, late at night, he used to sit at his window and turn the miraculous tube to the skies. Silently the minutes passed. The stars twinkled like eternal lamplets. God is love, thought the old man.

Slowly the news of his death travelled along the roads of Siberia. It was carried by convicts in "Haas" shackles. A year later the news reached the katorga of Nerchinsk.

That evening the convicts had a long discussion together. At the end of it the "artel" fund, set aside for bribing the executioner, was handed to the chief warder of the prison. The convicts asked that an ikon of Saint Fyodor should be bought for them with the fund, and hung in their barracks with a perpetual lamp.

"Now, you fellows, set your teeth," said the executioner grimly; "the knout is no longer greased."

"No matter," was their answer, "*Nichevo!* Weals heal: prayers endure!"

## Chapter 24

# PEASANTS, STAGE-COACHMEN, AND TRAMPS

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THE life of the exiles in Siberia was not an easy one. The Russian Government was not sentimental—in that respect it was like other Governments.

The English "transportation" system was put into operation almost at the same point of time as the Russian "ssylka" (banishment). The first columns of Russian exiles marched to Siberia at the end of the sixteenth century; the first English ships with cargoes of criminals sailed to Virginia and Maryland at the beginning of the seventeenth.

Both Governments pursued the same end—they wanted to rid the mother-country of elements of unrest and to provide settlers for their colonies. One difference between the two was that the English sold their criminals to the colonists as slaves through special agencies, whereas the Tsarist Government set out to utilize the labour of the criminals itself.

Peter the Great banished offenders mainly to the factories and mines of Transbaikalia and the Altai. He took little interest in agricultural colonization. In eastern Siberia, however, the Russian garrisons got very tired of living entirely on game and fish. The Russian demands bread before all else. Just after Peter's death the Government decided to erect a "corn magazine" by the Sea of Okhotsk.

In 1730 some thousands of exiles were sent to till the fields. Huge caravans, with women and children and household goods, went to Siberia. The journey took four years. Half of the "colonists" perished on the way. Those who reached the Sea of Okhotsk were given the bare minimum of equipment and told to sow corn. They obeyed, and sowed it; but not all the orders from St Petersburg could make it ripen. The cultivators went over to hunting and fishing. Some of them hunted wild game, others hunted the natives and also, at times, the imperial mail. After a few years there was no trace left of this colony.

Ten years later the same experiment was made in Kamchatka, with the same result.

Then colonists were sent into the Arctic Circle, along the Yenisei, or along the Lena, or to the Baraba steppe.

This steppe lies between the Ob and the Irtysh. Its southern part is genuine steppe, covered with tall, juicy, emerald-green

grass, in which a horse and rider can disappear from sight. But in the north there are salt lakes, then birch forests, and then marshes extending for many miles. Governor Chicherin determined to build a road through these marshes. Exiles were sent there from all over Siberia. They were sent in urgent haste, but less attention was paid to supplying shelter and food for them.

The exiles dug trenches, built miles of dykes, drove piles and rolled beams into the space between them. Countless victims perished of malaria or typhus. But the road was built, and Chicherin dedicated it and rode along it with ikons and music.

This road of Chicherin's led past a little settlement that bore the attractive name of Kainsk—"Cain's Town." The name came from the Kirghiz word "aken," "birch," but the inhabitants derived it from the first-born of Adam and Eve, explaining that according to local tradition he started work on that spot.

In Siberia the rivers were always the usual means of transit. In summer men sailed on them, in winter they went by sleigh. Regular roads were seldom built in Siberia. "Tracts" sufficed. They indicated the direction to be taken, and that was all; here and there clearances were made, and ferries were established on the great rivers. The thing that mattered most was the building at definite intervals of stations where it was possible to put up for the night, to change horses, and to get food.

These stations fulfilled the same function as the airports of today for trans-oceanic air-lines. The greatest difficulty was always their supply of attendants and horses.

The Siberian stage-coachmen had to live at these resting-places and with their horses to supply the needs of the mail, the Tsar's couriers, and anyone carrying a document with the Government's seal. The Government made superhuman efforts to provide itself with a sufficient number of these stage-coachmen. When in the seventeenth century, before the time of Peter the Great, the tract from Moscow to Tobolsk was cleared, exiles were settled along it at every fifty versts; the Government supplied them with land, food, horses, and big dogs. The exiles had not only to take travellers to the next stage, but to keep the road clear of deep snow in winter. The originator of this work, Prince Vassily Golitsyn, was himself banished for intriguing against the young Peter. The stage-coachmen got ready to give him a proper send-off along this road, along which he had sent so many exiles. But Peter did not permit them this pleasure: he banished Golitsyn to the tundra of Archangel.

The stage-coachmen were a characteristic type. They were tough and hardened to the weather. At a temperature of forty degrees below zero centigrade, they sat in their sheepskins on the edge of the sleighs, talked to their horses and their passengers, and sang songs. The Siberians had no qualms about trusting

their lives and their purses to these "criminals." But Russian travellers listened to the songs and shuddered all the way.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century the "tract" from Yakutsk to the Sea of Okhotsk was settled with exiles. It led through the most inhospitable and desolate stretches of eastern Siberia. The work of the coachmen in these regions was no lighter than that of the *katorga*. Consequently they ran away at the first opportunity, first plundering their passengers. Only those coachmen did not flee whose families were kept at the posting-houses. Thus it was found essential to provide the bachelors with wives. The Siberian peasants were ordered to give their daughters in marriage to none but exiles. Thus the young Siberian women became the principal factor in a regular transport service.

In 1799, under Tsar Paul, an ambitious attempt was made to settle the region of Transbaikalia. It was decided to send ten thousand persons there—criminals, soldiers who had incurred punishment, peasants who had been banished by the lord of the manor "for bad behaviour." Every colonist was required to take a wife with him. Any who had no wife were provided with one by the State, in addition to a horse and cart and a sheepskin.

It had been carefully set down on paper how the settlers should live in their new cottages: they would work six days in the week and go to church on the seventh; after church they would walk along the road, clean-shaven and in their best clothes, and sing songs. Even the text of these songs was printed in St Petersburg.

Unfortunately it turned out that, while the songs had been thought of, the building of the cottages had been overlooked. On arrival the settlers found themselves in a really dreadful situation. Most of them fled, and perished.

In 1807, under Alexander I, Treskin, Civil Governor of Irkutsk, decided to settle the Nizhne-Udinsk region in Transbaikalia. The Governor-General of Siberia was then General Pestel. He was a pure-blooded German. His father had come from Saxony to Moscow, had reorganized the Moscow postal system, and had died as Director of Posts and a privy councillor. The son studied in Germany, and then returned to Russia and entered the army. He won favour with Tsar Alexander. He was a man of culture, and so, once he had smelt the air of Siberia, he preferred to retain his rank of Governor-General of Siberia but to live in St Petersburg. Siberia was administered for him by his subordinate Treskin.

Treskin had not studied in Germany, but he had plans and ideas enough for all Europe. As Pestel had unlimited confidence in him, he proceeded to carry out his plans in eastern Siberia. There is no other part of the earth with such opportunities for carrying out plans of any and every sort without interruption.

Treskin was a loyal subject of the Siberian Tsar Pestel, and therefore of the Russian Tsar Alexander, and he had a deep hatred of the French Revolution. Nevertheless he resolved to build up the existence of the humankind under his rule "on the basis of reason," and to put into operation in Transbaikalia the principles of Equality and Fraternity. Only Liberty was reserved by this Siberian Robespierre to himself.

He began to settle the country with exiles, and founded eighteen villages, with smitheries, granaries, mills, and workshops. The exiles were given houses, the essential equipment, seeds for their fields, and wives. They were required to sow grain, to work in the Government workshops, to perform all communal works, and to live in accordance with the principles of Faith, Hope, and Charity. In the morning they got up at the roll of the drum, washed themselves in accordance with regulations, and assembled at prescribed points for common prayer, at which the psalms were sung in the prescribed order. Then their work was assigned to them. For all work regulations were issued. The harvesting in the fields, the baking of bread, the grooming and harnessing of horses, the rest intervals and the use of leisure—all had to be carried out in accordance with Treskin's regulations. Marriages were concluded by order of the authorities, which provided the young men with their wives.

Needless to say, this social paradise required for its maintenance a considerable military force and a large number of cudgels. Both were supplied in sufficient quantity by Treskin's orders. This experiment failed, however, to serve as a guiding star for the rest of mankind, because it came to an end the moment Treskin was arrested for receiving bribes and for acts of violence. His regulations passed into oblivion, the exiles ceased to sing psalms and to love at the beat of the drum, and the villages steadily emptied. The fires on the altars of the Siberian Goddess of Reason died down.

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Every scheme of colonization in Siberia inevitably ended in some or all of the colonists absconding. As they went on living in the forests, theoretically they must have continued the work of colonization. But they were no longer settled. They turned into tramps, keeping out of sight of the police and wandering from place to place. They made common cause with runaway convicts, and collected in bands.

In summer there was food to be found in the forests. But in winter the fugitives were driven by cold and hunger into inhabited places. They prowled about them like packs of wolves. Hunger compelled them to go in search of plunder. When the police

organized a drive against the tramps, they caught hundreds, sometimes thousands, at the points at which the tramps' routes crossed.

In the old times escape from the *katorga* was not impossible. In this respect it did not live up to its European reputation. Who remembers today the strange episode in Prussian criminal history of the banishment of German "vagabonds" to Siberia because their own authorities could not prevent them from escaping from their prisons? A special agreement was concluded under which the Russian Government most kindly placed at the disposal of the Prussian Government the mines of Nerchinsk, of which a Prussian "Publicandum" states that they "are situated in the north-eastern extremity of Asia, not far from the borders of Chinese Tartary and about a thousand German miles from the borders of the Royal States. . . . The foolhardy person who should attempt flight from his penal settlement can nowhere hope either for safety for his person or for the satisfaction of the most rudimentary needs of life, and his attempts at flight would thus necessarily result before long in the most terrible death."

Having regard to these qualities of the Nerchinsk *katorga*, His Majesty made his own royal choice of eight-and-fifty of the most dangerous criminals, and in 1802 they were sent on their long journey. And as the chosen men had been really specialists in their trade, and as they had been told that flight from Nerchinsk was an absolute impossibility, nearly all of them broke away as soon as they had crossed the Russian frontier into Siberia. After this the Siberian Government naturally declined to receive the gang of a hundred and fifty criminals that next arrived.

Customs in those days were rough but patriarchal. The criminals drew advantage from the boredom that afflicted the inhabitants of the Siberian towns. When the notorious robber Korenev was in the *katorga* at Yeniseisk, he received visits from benevolent ladies and God-fearing old gentlemen. He told the ladies that what had been his undoing was unrequited love. To the pious old gentlemen he said that he dreamed of entering a monastery. This was about a hundred years ago.

The ladies and the God-fearing old gentlemen were touched—and that was all that the wily criminal wanted. Nothing unlooses purse-strings so quickly as emotion. Under the protection of that emotion Korenev organized, in prison, under the noses of the guards, the manufacture of false coin. Experts say it was better than the genuine coin.

A good play-actor, however, loves a change of parts. Sometimes Korenev suddenly varied his tone. He had seen that his visitor wanted not emotion but sensation. Then he began to invent the past—to tell how he had butchered a woman "out of

curiosity," or to explain that in highway robbery it is essential to murder the victims, so as to have no witnesses left.

One day a benefactor began to preach to Korenev. "Have you really never felt twinges of conscience?" he asked, standing in his fine furs in front of the prisoner, who was crouching on a bundle of filthy straw, in chains that were welded to the damp wall.

"Never," answered Korenev.

"Can that be so? How many people have you robbed of their lives?"

"I don't remember the exact number. They say it is eighteen."

"Great God! And never once has your hand trembled as it spilt the blood of your brother!"

"I have never inquired into the relationship," replied the robber, grimacing viciously at the preacher as he reeled from the dungeon.

All the prisoners had fits of viciousness. Woe to those who had to do with Korenev at such moments. But sometimes his viciousness was an expression of higher feelings. A Moscow shop-assistant who had been condemned to penal servitude received a visit in prison from a young girl, the daughter of an exile. She gave him all she had, including her young love. The convicts envied the fortunate Don Juan. Puffed up by his success, he began to talk about his romance and to describe in detail the proofs of love he had received and the further proofs he proposed in due course to gather. Before he had finished boasting, Korenev had silently stalked up to him. The whole of the occupants of the cell applauded as he beat the boaster long and mercilessly. The convicts were "desperate characters," but not low fellows.

When spring came and the cuckoo in the forest began to call the years of the sentences, the prisoners were seized with a mad desire for freedom. "General Cuckoo has arrived," they said, looking into each other's eyes; everyone understood what that meant. In consequence of the "patriarchal" prison system there were often the most fantastic attempts at escape. Once a prisoner in Irkutsk left the prison, changed his clothing, and went to a ball-room crowded with the local aristocracy. There was great merriment, so great that the new arrival emptied the pocket of the crown solicitor of a hundred roubles, purloined the same sum from the treasury chest officer, and took away as a memento the gold watch worn by the Governor.

Then he made a tour of the taverns and vodka-shops, drinking and having a gay time. Finally he got drunk and excited. A fugitive should never do that. In that state a man begins to give himself away, and then it is a simple matter for the police to take him home again.

In the early years of the last century about a quarter of the

prisoners in the Nerchinsk katorga escaped. Most of them ran away when at work in the mines or the building works, or at timber-felling. But they also escaped from the "secure" cells for solitary confinement. Frequently the morning round showed in the cell only the prisoner's chains.

It was not, of course, an easy matter. No little energy and physical resource was required for an escape. These are qualities not seldom possessed by prisoners. But what are we to say of a woman prisoner who jumped out of the window of her cell in Omsk prison at the moment when a cow was passing? So cleverly had she calculated her jump that she landed on the cow's back. She thought she would be able to gallop away from her persecutors. The cow did gallop, mad with fright—but made straight for the prison gate, where the guards were standing.

The flight had failed, but the woman was every man's heroine. The whole katorga was in love with her.

Flight was possible, but it was extremely dangerous. The fugitive always risked his life, for the guards did not always fire into the air. But the worst trouble came later. It was essential to evade pursuit; but hunger left no choice but to make for human habitations.

It was great good fortune if the fugitive came up to a kind-hearted peasant who did not make for him with a pitchfork or shout to the neighbours to pursue him. The kind-heartedness was often calculated: the peasant did not want to draw down upon himself a mortal enmity. Korenev had spoken truly—the law of the taiga was: If you have harmed anyone, kill him, or he will take revenge. Only it was not so simple to kill every fugitive at once—the fugitives had comrades. Consequently the owners of isolated farms would put up the fugitive for the night and give him food. In the cottages on the fringe of the villages the peasants' wives put a couple of crusts outside the window every night, and often a jug of milk as well. Special little shelves were fitted beneath the windows for this purpose.

There was another consideration that also made it worth while to give shelter to fugitives. In Siberia there was a great deal of land, and a dearth of people to cultivate it. The farmers were short of labour. If a fugitive made his appearance and asked for food, the farmer said to him: "You want a meal? Go and do some work." In this way the farmer acquired some unpaid assistance. The fugitive ate his fill, ate all he could. But then he listened again to the recruiting summons of General Cuckoo. Scarcely ever did he coolly make off without a word; he explained that he "must be getting on now."

In the breast of the tramp, as of all men, there dwelt two souls. He was capable of the most outrageous faithlessness—and at the same time of heroic acts of loyalty. In Siberia the servants



of the administrative authorities and of the propertied people were all convicts who had served their sentence. A woman who had spent eight years in the katorga for child murder was employed as nurse in an engineer's family; the engineer's wife said she had never seen a better or kinder or more thoughtful nurse. A remand judge had for his coachman a convict who had been in chains for twelve years for the murder of—a remand judge.

At times the Administration made use in its own interests of convicts' experience and organizing ability. In the eighteenthies there was a robber, Dubrovin, whose name was in all men's mouths in Transbaikalia. Twice he had fled from the katorga. After the first flight he joined a gang of river pirates on the Shilka and literally brought all shipping on the river to a standstill. After great efforts he was caught, and sentenced to such a penalty that the floggings had to be given in instalments. After each instalment he was nursed back to health, and then given the next.

Two years later General Cuckoo was busy again in the taiga, and Dubrovin broke out once more. He was soon heard of, for he had robbed and killed a Cossack. He was caught again, but escaped this time on the way to prison. Cossacks scoured the region for many versts round, and the whole population was mobilized in the search for Dubrovin. He was found in the forest, half dead with hunger, and with a dislocated ankle.

He was taken to the katorga, and there he was chained to the wall by neck and feet, the "fox" was riveted round his hands, and he was put on low diet. The "fox" was a block of iron weighing a pood and a half, almost half a hundredweight.

In this situation Dubrovin softened and began to repent. When the chaplain visited him, Dubrovin, to the general astonishment, reeled off passages from the Old and New Testament like a divinity student at his examination. His new tone so carried conviction that even the extremely sceptical prison staff placed faith in him. The "fox" was taken off him and he was unchained.

About this time Governor Muravyev was building a new city, Nikolayevsk, on the estuary of the Amur. Consignments of food and material were continually being sent there, and a new prison was being built. A gang of two hundred convicts had to be taken there, and only three or four soldiers were available as escorts. The prison governor sent for Dubrovin and suggested to him that he should convey the prisoners to their new destination.

"You may rest assured," said Dubrovin, "that they will not get away from me!"

The provisions were loaded on to the barque, the convicts went on board, the three soldiers with them, and in command was the gaolbird Dubrovin. The company had a voyage to make downstream of some three thousand versts—two thousand miles.

On the long passage down the Amur Dubrovin organized a choir that chanted the Paternoster morning and evening; at intervals during the day it sang cheerful pirate shanties. When they landed, Dubrovin sent out parties of prisoners on hunting and fishing expeditions. One of the hunters seized an opportunity to break away. Dubrovin caught him with the aid of the rest, flogged him on board to the accompaniment of hymns, and forbade the escort to breathe a word about the incident.

He delivered the prisoners to the last man, and every sack of corn and salt to the exact number and weight. Together with the rest of the batch of prisoners, Dubrovin was then locked up in the new prison.

He had shown what he could do when he was trusted. Yet he soon changed again into an ordinary prisoner—after two months he broke out with three comrades. One of these three was the man he had flogged for trying to get away from his transport. For a long time nothing was heard of Dubrovin. Then it was reported that with his comrades he had kidnapped a young Cossack girl and carried her into the taiga. That is the last mention of him in the history of Siberia.

The most dangerous enemies of the fugitives were not the Russian authorities, and not even the Cossacks, but the Buryats. This Mongol race had migrated from China in the fourteenth century and settled in eastern Siberia. The Buryats were a race of horsemen and were armed. For every fugitive they delivered to the authorities they received from the Russian Government a reward of three roubles. But they were careful reckoners, and when they caught a convict they calculated what his clothes were worth, whether he was wearing boots, and whether he had any money on him. If these things were worth in all more than three roubles, they killed him. The convicts were well aware of this. If a Buryat fell into their hands they took off his clothes, bound him to a tree, heated an iron pan until it was red-hot, and then thrust it down over the Buryat's head.

In the course of three centuries Siberia was settled by the Russians. But this colonization proceeded as an elemental movement, not in accordance with the Government's plans but in defiance of them. The genuine, powerful Siberian peasants had nothing in common with the exiles and the runaway prisoners. In vain did the Government order them to give their daughters in marriage to the exiles; in vain did it favour the exiles in every possible way and try to bind them perforce to the soil. The exile-colonists seldom struck root. After three hundred years of these efforts at the settlement of exiles Alexander III said: "The time has come to make an end of the colonization of Siberia with the dregs of Russia."

## Chapter 25

### "THE DREGS OF RUSSIA"

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ALEXANDER III did an injustice to the exiles in dismissing them as "dregs." He could not know that the end of the Romanov dynasty was to be associated with Siberia; but he should have known that its beginning had been.

When, after the death of Ivan the Terrible, Boris Godunov began to clear the way to the throne for himself, among the many boyar families of whom he rid himself as dangerous rivals were the Romanovs. Four brothers, Alexander, Mikhail, Vassily, and Ivan, the sons of the boyar Nikita Romanov, were sent into exile. Alexander was sent to the "gubernia" (province) of Perm, and there was strangled in prison. Mikhail was also exiled to Perm, and died of starvation. The two other brothers were sent across the Urals, to the same Pelym to which, ten years earlier, the inhabitants of the town of Uglich had been banished.

The young and powerful Vassily was put in chains and taken to an underground dungeon. His warders took no trouble to feed him. The inhabitants of Pelym taught their children, as they played round the prison, to put milk, butter, and groats in their toys through the barred window for the captive.

Nevertheless Vassily's strength was soon exhausted. A year later he died. The authorities of Pelym ordered mass to be said for his soul. For this the sum of twenty roubles was paid "to the three popes, the sexton, and the bell-ringer."

Of the four brothers, only Ivan remained alive. With an arm and a leg crippled by rheumatism he returned to Russia.

There was a fifth brother, Fyodor, whom Boris Godunov had not exiled to Siberia. He had merely compelled him to wear the cowl and sent him to a remote monastery. The son of this fifth brother became the first Tsar of the Romanov dynasty.

The settlement of Siberia began in the seventeenth century. Bands of Cossacks pushed farther and farther eastwards. Deeper and deeper in Siberia they planted their ostrogs. The word "ostrog" means an enclosed and fortified encampment. But it also means prison. About the middle of the seventeenth century there were already such prisons at Turukhansk, Kirensk, Irkutsk, Selenginsk, Nerchinsk, Yakutsk, and Kuznetsk. Even on the distant Amur there rose the prison of Albazin. There were also women's prisons at Tobolsk, Yeniseisk, and Irkutsk. They were attached to the nunneries.

With the installation of the Romanov dynasty there began the regular colonization of Siberia with political criminals. The boyars who had elected the Tsar said: "Michael is young and foolish; we shall easily manage him." But they forgot Michael's advisers. These advisers began immediately after his election to send all their opponents to Siberia.

The young Tsar proposed to marry Khlopova, daughter of a boyar, but Khlopova fell ill. On this she was sent to Siberia with her relations, who were accused of "harming" the Tsar's bride; their explanation that the maiden had drunk herself ill out of joy over the Tsar's favour was ignored. Apart from this, there were always pretexts enough for banishment. People were banished for "unseemly talk," for association with Poles and Lithuanians, for giving support to pretenders to the throne (who, after the tragic end of the two principal ones, shot up out of the earth like mushrooms after rain). Finally, under this same Government, the first Polish prisoners of war were exiled to Siberia.

Under Tsar Alexis, Tsar Michael's son, Siberia was able to welcome its first visitors from the Ukraine. The Ukrainian hetman Mnogogreshny was brought to Moscow, together with his brother and the pope Gribovich and two other accused persons; at the end of the hearing in court they were all sentenced to death. Their heads were already lying on the block when a courier came from the Tsar. The Tsar reprieved the "traitors" and commanded that they should be banished to Siberia. Next day a second courier came to the prison and brought a new message of mercy: the sum of ten roubles was to be paid to Mnogogreshny and five roubles apiece to his brother and the two others "for their journey," from the Tsar's private purse.

With their families and their household goods, and even with female servants, they were taken to Tobolsk. They were treated humanely, and were on the point of being released from their chains when the impetuous pope Gribovich fled. He returned to the Cossacks of Zaporog, and there all traces of him were lost. But his flight at once worsened the situation of the rest. They were sent to remoter places, and were separated. Mnogogreshny went with his wife and son to Yakutsk. Some years later, as a measure of mercy, he was transferred to the prison at Selenginsk, in Transbaikalia. But Yakutsk did not remain without a hetman. A second one, Ivan Samoilovich, was sent there. He had made a vain attempt to build on his political talent: it brought him migration, first from the banks of the Dnieper to those of the Lena, and then, a little later, to a better world. Three years later he was followed there by his son. His wife, who had separated from her husband and had been exiled to Yeniseisk, returned to end her days in the Ukraine.

Mnogogreshny passed year after year at Selenginsk. The autonomous Ukraine—land of the pink cherry-blossom—was now but a distant, half-forgotten dream.

In 1687 Fyodor Golovin came from Moscow to Selenginsk to negotiate with the Chinese, and later he was besieged there by Buryats and Kirghizes. The siege lasted two months. It is very doubtful whether Golovin would have been extricated from this situation had not the old hetman Mnogogreshny unsheathed his sword. He organized the defence, drove the enemy to flight, pursued them, beat them yet again, and finally robbed the Buryats of all desire to fight further for Buryat autonomy.

He had now repaid with interest his debt to the Tsar—his life and ten roubles. For eighteen years he had lived in Siberia, but he left that out of account. He died at Selenginsk. His son, who had come into the world in Siberia and had never seen the Ukraine, was rewarded for his father's services by elevation to the rank of boyarevich.

To this day there are traces of Ukrainian inheritance from the past among the population of Siberia. Unlike the Ukrainian emigrants of the nineteenth century, the type has not maintained its purity in Siberia. A special type has resulted from the intermingling of Ukrainian and Tungus elements.

The Ukrainian period in the history of Siberia started under Tsar Alexis and ended under Catherine II with the banishment of the last 138 Zaporog Cossacks to the Lena. In the intervening years under Peter the Great a broad Russian current cut through the Ukrainian wave. It was formed by the Guards from the Tsar's capital—the officers and other ranks of the old Moscow troops. These, too, were by no means dregs. They were simply men of the old Moscow. Brought up in the comfortable and easy-going Muscovite empire, they were upset and alarmed by the vigorous onset of the new imperialism. They had no desire to make the leap with the Tsar into a new epoch.

The first 30 of the Guards were banished to Siberia after a relatively unimportant conspiracy. Some years later, however, while the Tsar was abroad, there was a real rising. Before Peter's return the boyars had sent 74 men to the gallows and banished 140 to Siberia. But the Tsar did not rest content with that when he came back. He ordered a new inquiry. On September 11, 1698, 201 men were executed and 100 youths flogged with the knout, branded on the right cheek, and exiled at once to Siberia.

On October 3 there were further executions, and more every day until the 18th. Several hundred persons died at the hands of the executioner. For five months the corpses of the victims lay on the ground or hung from the walls of the Kremlin. During this period only 93 youths were sent to Siberia. On the other

hand, at the beginning of 1699 "only" 137 of the 508 persons condemned were broken on the wheel and hanged, but 285 were flogged, branded, and exiled to the katorga; 86 were held back for further torture. On February 9, 1700, 40 of these were executed, 9 reprieved, and 37 transported to Siberia.

Between the executions columns of Guards, 1000 at a time, set out for perpetual residence in Siberia. The other Russian towns had their share in this in the years that followed. The exiles broke away, revolted, formed rebel bands. They were captured again and sent still farther away. There was no spot so remote or so desolate as to be without its colony of Guards. They were to be found on the estuary of the Yenisei, by the Anadyr and the Kolyma, on the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk, by the Amur, and in Kamchatka. Their traces remain to this day. There are places on the banks of the Lena where the population has a soft, singing accent like that of Moscow, an accent not to be found in the rest of Russian Siberia, the speech of which is harsh and "Novgorodian." After two hundred years the peasants in those spots still wore coats and caps of which the cut recalled the historic uniform of the Guards of Peter the Great!

Many others did Peter send to Siberia. It is impossible even to mention them all. Siberia formed the fateful keystone of almost every eminent political career. Under the whistle of the knout and the clattering of bones there danced, company by company, a mad procession across the Urals.

## THE PROCESSION

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AFTER Peter's death his widow, Catherine I, ascended the throne. Her first consort had been a Swedish dragoon, her second—the Tsar of Russia. Between the two had come Menshikov and others. What can a woman have offered for such a career? Catherine I, to the end of her life, could neither read nor write. Yet she was beyond question an able woman.

The empire was ruled on her behalf by Peter's favourite, the gifted, hedonist, conscienceless Prince Menshikov. He suited the Tsaritsa perfectly—he had begun his career as a pieman, with a wooden tray hung from his neck. Then he had become a soldier, and then batman to the Tsar. He gave his master the best proof of his loyalty: after a good meal he and Peter cheerfully tucked up their sleeves and cut off the heads of rebellious Guards in the Red Square in Moscow. The rest of the Tsar's guests paled, trembled, fainted. Menshikov laughed and whistled lively tunes.

He was the master of the uneducated Empress, and did whatever he liked. He schemed to get his daughter married to the Crown Prince, later Peter II. In vain did the party of the Conservative aristocrats, under Prince Dolgorukov, oppose him. Menshikov gained the day—and the aristocrats went on a long journey.

Menshikov did not spare even his own relatives. Anton Devier had come to St Petersburg as steward on board a Portuguese ship. He attracted the attention of Peter the Great, and proved a smart man. He rose step by step, and began to court Menshikov's sister; but the ex-pieman did not value an alliance with the ex-steward.

Some time later the Portuguese came again to see Menshikov, and, blinking with his black eyes, intimated that it was high time that the marriage should take place, as otherwise the *senhorita* would find herself in a most embarrassing situation.

Prince Menshikov understood. He sent for his servants and had the wooer taken down to the stable, and there given a hundred strokes, and stinging ones.

When the Tsar heard the story he laughed heartily, but determined to bring about a reconciliation between his two favourites. He raised Devier to count's rank, and commanded the prince to give his sister to the count in marriage.

After Peter's death, however, Menshikov paid back his brother-

in-law. The Portuguese was flogged a second time, and banished to Okhotsk. There he had fifteen years in which to think with regret of the ship in which he had once washed the dishes and dreamed of a bright future.

Menshikov did not venture to come down so heavily on Dolgorukov. He only removed him from the court and sent him to a provincial post.

When Catherine died and Peter II, a minor, became Tsar, Menshikov began to prepare the way for the planned marriage between Peter and his daughter. The marriage was definitely arranged, but it never took place: the young Tsar was overtaken by a premature death. That ended Menshikov's career. Prince Dolgorukov returned to Moscow, and His Highness Prince Menshikov had to proceed to the city of Beryosov, on the Yenisei.

Dolgorukov was not merciless. Menshikov left Moscow with his wife and son and two daughters, in three golden equipages, followed by his retinue and menials in twenty coaches and by a hundred waggons carrying his possessions. The owner of ninety-one thousand serfs, and of seven million roubles in coin, gold, and brilliants, could afford that.

Yet before the journey was over he realized that the bright days of glory were over. He was taken out of his golden equipage and set in a common cart. Beyond Kazan his wife died; the winter journey had been too much for her.

His estates in Russia were confiscated, but he still had his money. He was not tormented in exile. He lived in freedom under police supervision. After a long interval his hands grasped the axe again, though not this time to cut off heads but to help to build a church he was erecting at his own expense. He repented and prayed and helped the poor. The people of Beryosov saw in him a "righteous servant of the Lord."

Dolgorukov had revenged himself on his old enemy. But the enmity of the fathers was overcome by the love of the children. Young Prince Dolgorukov travelled secretly, under an assumed name, to Beryosov. In the church which the sworn enemy of the young man's family had built with his own hands, the prince wedded Maria Menshikov. But theirs was but a brief happiness: the young wife died in childbirth.

He buried her by the Sosva. A hundred years later the river carried away its bank, and the coffin was uncovered. Within it rested all that remained of Maria Menshikov, dressed in satin, with the ribbon of an Order on her breast.

Fate plays with men. But Siberia hospitably received every arrival. After Peter II came Anna Yoannovna, Duchess of Courland and niece of Peter the Great. The new Empress was a merry but quick-tempered woman. She was a devotee of the



joys of the table, and one day when she thought the butter was rancid she had the cook hanged outside the kitchen door. When she was not at meals she sat in an easy-chair and watched the practical jokes of the court jesters and the dancing of apes and the hopping of exotic birds. Day after day there were banquets, hunts, and fireworks. It was clear that the land needed a man to rule it.

He was found in the person of a nobleman of Courland, Ernst Johann Biron. Anna had met him during her stay in Mitau, and had brought him to Russia with her. In Courland he had been an undistinguished official; in St Petersburg he became Duke of Courland and actual ruler of Russia. His stately presence and his unusually handsome face had contributed not a little to this transformation.

Anna and Biron followed an undying tradition in beginning their period of rule: they settled accounts with all who had been hostile to them in the past. Biron now sent Dolgorukov to that same Beryosov to which Dolgorukov had sent Menshikov. Dolgorukov in his turn went with his family, but not with anything to compare with the conveniences which Menshikov had been able to permit himself.

The old count and his wife did not suffer their banishment for long. They were both dead within three years. They left behind three daughters and four sons. Biron had a vicious nature, and Anna did not excel in good works. The two continued to torment the family of their dead enemy. The young Princess Helena had a mass read on her name-day; the priest who had consented to read it was exiled to the remotest of the prisons of the empire. An informer reported that the members of the family "talked ill" of Biron among themselves; on this they were locked up separately in cold sheds and barns—clearly Biron thought the children of the Dolgorukov whom he had destroyed ought to express the warmest feelings for him.

At Easter the prince's sons sang Easter hymns, as all Russia did. But the thing that was permissible for ordinary prisoners was forbidden to them, and for this infringement of discipline they were flogged.

Then they were conveyed to Tobolsk, and there brought into court and sentenced to further banishment: one was sent to Kamchatka and there made to serve as a sailor; the second was knouted, his tongue cut out, and the victim then exiled to Okhotsk as a settler; the third was banished after similar tortures to Kamchatka; the fourth was brought back to Russia, where he was joined by two brothers of his father and all three were beheaded after being broken on the wheel. Dolgorukov's sisters were banished to various nunnery-prisons in Siberia.

The handsome Biron and the merry Anna did not waste time. In the ten years of their joint rule some twenty thousand political offenders were exiled to Siberia.

But even those terrible ten years came to an end. On October 17, 1740, Anna Yoannovna died. Biron became "Regent of the Empire." He was elected to that office by the Supreme Council, at the head of which were Ostermann, the Chancellor, and Field-Marshal Münnich.

Three weeks later, Münnich had Biron arrested, and for the third time in this epoch a woman became Empress—Anna Leopoldovna, niece of Anna Yoannovna. She reigned only for a year in all. This was time enough for Münnich to banish Biron to Siberia, to Pelym, not far from the place where Menshikov and Dolgorukov had come to their end. Together with Biron, his two brothers and his father-in-law, General von Bismarck, went to Siberia.

Münnich was an outstanding engineer and organizer. He himself drew the plan of the house built in Pelym for Biron. He arranged a perfectly comfortable existence for him. Biron had riding-horses, went hunting, had ample servants, and in his green velvet doublet, bordered with sable, he looked just as handsome at Pelym as he had done at Moscow. He only lacked admirers.

He did not stay long at Pelym. Elizabeth, daughter of Peter the Great and "Hetmaness of the Guards," threw Anna down from the throne, or, rather, pulled her out of bed one night. And after this rude awakening Anna ended her days in exile, by the shore of the White Sea.

Elizabeth had not forgotten that in the past Biron had once protected her from the jealous Anna and had given her needed financial help. She recalled him from exile. With him returned his companions. On the bridge over the river at Kazan his coach was met by another. A head in a three-cornered hat looked out of the window. It was that of the dismissed dictator of Russia, Field-Marshal Münnich, whose turn had now come. He drove on to Pelym in Biron's place. Silently the two looked in each other's eyes; then the coaches passed on.

Münnich was installed in the house he had planned for Biron. He spent twenty years in it.

Elizabeth recalled from exile many of her old supporters, and especially those who had been good to her in bad times. After Biron she thought of the Dolgorukov family, whom Biron had so mercilessly ruined. The Princesses Dolgorukov were traced in their Siberian nunneries, and Elizabeth commanded that efforts should be made to find their three brothers. But that was easier said than done. All trace of them had been lost. One of them learned in Kamchatka, two years later, of his liberation. A

merchant took him in compassion to Irkutsk. There he went to the Governor, but the Governor refused to recognize in the bearded tramp the son of the once magnificent dignitary. The tramp could only stammer indistinctly, and pointed to the stump of his tongue, but this was no proof for the Governor: you could pick up in Siberia just as many persons with their tongues cut out as you liked.

The second brother, too, was unearthed. Many years later there came to the Governor of Irkutsk an old man who was night watchman at one of the churches in that city. "I am Prince Nikolai Dolgorukov," he wrote on a sheet of paper. This time the Governor believed him.

The third brother was not found.

Together with Münnich, Elizabeth sent his political friends to Siberia. The Chancellor, the old Count Ostermann, went to Beryosov; the Cabinet Minister Golovkin went to the "dogs' prison" at Srednekolymsk; Baron Mengden, president of the commercial "collegium" (association), went a little farther north.

Of all these, Münnich alone returned to Russia—after twenty years.

They fared variously, some better, some worse. The most fortunate of all, according to Siberian tradition, was Anna Bestusheva, Münnich's daughter-in-law. She enjoyed entire freedom in Yakutsk, mixed in society, played cards, lived well, and dressed in splendour. She had been famous in St Petersburg as a *prima ballerina*, and her fame was not less in Yakutsk. She was the only woman in Yakutsk who talked neither scandal nor foolishness. The precaution had been taken before she left for Siberia of cutting out her tongue.

Enough, however, of these brutal old stories. After Elizabeth, the short-lived Peter III watched over the populating of Siberia. He himself escaped ending his own days there through being strangled in his palace. After him, Catherine II supplied inhabitants for the country of gloom. Under her rule there continued to be conspirators, usurpers, critics. The most important Russian writer of the eighteenth century, Radishchev, one of the earliest fighters for the liberation of the serfs, she banished for ten years to Ilimsk for publishing his humane, wonderful book, *Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow*.

Catherine also kept up the tradition which Peter the Great had taken over from old Moscow, of sending prisoners of war to Siberia. Before Peter's time these had mostly been Poles, for Moscow was continually at war with Poland. Peter began sending Swedes as well. He was an admirer of Sweden; he had adopted Swedish legislation and Swedish methods of warfare, and he was glad of the opportunity of "introducing" Swedes into Siberia.

In this he succeeded only partly. The Siberian population regarded the Swedes as heretics, and would have nothing to do with them. Young Swedes fell in love with Siberian girls of Russian origin, but the parents refused to let them marry them—a refusal that produced stern decrees from Peter the Great and a quarrel with the Holy Synod.

Nevertheless the Swedes did much good work in Siberia. They were active in building, they managed the first smelting-works, and they even established schools. We owe to a Swedish officer who was taken prisoner at Poltava, Strahlenberg, a useful book on Siberia and a good map, which he published in Stockholm after his liberation.

THE POSTMASTER FROM EAST PRUSSIA

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DURING the Seven Years War Siberia also received German exiles. They were not all prisoners of war. The postmaster of Pillau, Johann Ludwig Wagner, an official of the Royal Prussian postal service, was purely a civilian in spite of the sword he wore, and apart from his postal duties he occupied himself only with playing the piano, the flute, the fiddle, and chess. During the Russian occupation he remained loyal to his king, and, with other loyal Prussians, reported to the proper quarter the movements of Russian troops.

This dangerous activity ended with his transfer by the Russian authorities, in the persons of Major von Wittke and Prince Repnin, on February 25, 1759, straight from his piano, at which he was playing a duet with his sister, into prison. This Prince Repnin was the same who many years later took Dr Haas with him from Vienna to Moscow.

Baron Korff, the Russian Governor of Königsberg, interrogated Wagner, and two months later Privy Councillor Klingenberg pronounced his sentence—death by quartering.

For some days the unfortunate man suffered intolerable tortures. He was actually on the point of execution when he was informed that the death-penalty had been commuted to banishment to Siberia. With a transport of Russian wounded he was sent on board ship to the estuary of the Duna, and from there, under escort, in a "kibitka," a long-distance sleigh, to Siberia—via Moscow, Solikamsk, Tyumen, Tobolsk, across the Baraba steppe (where Chicherin's road had not yet been built), to Yeniseisk, and thence by dog-sleigh to Mangaseya. The postmaster had travelled in his sleigh along the whole of the historic path of the conquest of Siberia.

At Mangaseya a little house was built for him; there he lived with a guard of three men and a sergeant.

He passed three years there. Life was, of course, not easy for him. But he was unfamiliar with Siberian customs. Otherwise he would have had a better appreciation of certain things, such as the fact that a special stove had been built for him, a stove that was stoked from outside, so that the smoke did not get into his eyes as it did for most Siberians. He was permitted to fish and hunt as much as he liked. His flute and fiddle won him friends. He composed tunes as he played his flute, and for lack of paper and ink he wrote them with charcoal on the wall, and then he

played these hieroglyphics, to the amazement and admiration of the Cossack guards, on his violin.

The only trouble was that the sergeant had an additional calling in addition to the military one, and a calling that was in high repute in Siberia. He was a tailor, and also a "madame tailor": he made men's and ladies' clothes. He worked in the evenings, and for his work he appropriated the candles allotted to Wagner. There was a violent quarrel, and Wagner threw him out of his room; he also injured his leg by throwing a piece of iron after him.

The sergeant represented the incident to the voyevod in such a way that the voyevod ordered that the prisoner should be robbed of all light—his windows were to be nailed up. This seemed barbaric to Wagner, as, of course, it was. But it was in accordance with an old tradition: in the old Russia the prisons were called "temnitsa," meaning "dark place," and the builders took care that not much light should enter them. The voyevod was applying to Wagner the lightest disciplinary action. Much worse might have been done to him.

After two years of this life Wagner was informed that he was free. He would be taken under armed guard to the Prussian frontier. All Mangaseya fêted him. The new voyevod who had come was his friend. He personally told Wagner of the order for his liberation, had food and drink brought from his own house, toasted the prisoner on his liberation, and invited him to dine with him. Wagner had heard that the voyevod's wife was hospitable and pretty, and he accepted the invitation with pleasure.

Wagner was a musician and dancer, and, as he modestly reports in his memoirs, he "could not but look hale and hearty." After the dinner at the voyevod's a ball was arranged in his honour. At the ball he showed "the same courtesy to all the Cossacks' ladies, out of discretion and in order to do no dishonour to the German nation in the matter of etiquette."

He departed from Mangaseya with a heavy heart, and went to Yeniseisk, where he entered the hospitable kingdom of "Little Father Chicherin." Here he devoted himself heart and soul to the study of the fair sex of Siberia. He simply would not go away, and departed at last only because a certain lady of Yeniseisk had grown so jealous that she had determined to poison him. He left the city, but not alone: he took a young maiden with him. She was unable, however, to go far with him as she had no papers. His account of his "Sufferings as a Prisoner of State among the Russians" reads at this point almost like the memoirs of Casanova.

"The womenfolk of Yeniseisk," he writes, "charmed me by their marked beauty." At another place he informs us that "I must confess that I have never been inimical to the kiss of a lovely woman," and at yet another, "I had the satisfaction of seeing my love returned by

the most cordial inclination." Finally comes the general conclusion: "The Siberian maidens are indescribably attracted to Germans."

The return journey was easy and pleasant. In every town Wagner was received and put up by the Governor; he visited bishops and mayors, and everywhere enjoyed boundless hospitality and the choicest menus. All this was excellent, but his money came to an end. His escort then suggested an idea, to which he condescended to give his approval. At every new town they reached, his guards went into shops and asked the prices of the costliest articles, explaining that they were escorting a prisoner of the highest rank, a Prussian dignitary who had been ten years in Siberia. It was terribly difficult to satisfy him, and he would make no purchases himself: he refused to show himself to anybody, and nobody was allowed to catch sight of him.

After this gossip everyone was burning to see Wagner. Traders, officials, priests, sought the acquaintance of the high Prussian official and loaded the soldiers with tips for themselves and gifts for the "dignitary." The length of the audience with him depended on the gift; it might be either in money or in kind, but nothing of less value than ten roubles was accepted. Preference was shown for furs and "Sinese silk"; failing these, sugar, tea, and coffee were accepted; the latter, as Wagner regretfully remarks, was seldom forthcoming.

His frame of mind on this homeward journey may be imagined. He was in no hurry. He wanted particularly to see St Petersburg; but this pleasure was denied him. Nevertheless, it was, as he writes, "a splendid journey."

On February 25, 1764, exactly five years after his arrest, Wagner reached Königsberg on his way from Mangaseya. He was received like a hero. The reports of his valiant deeds and his sufferings spread, it is safe to say, throughout Prussia.

On April 25 Wagner reached Potsdam, and met the King at the changing of the guard.

"Snow was falling heavily. The monarch did not seem at all cheerful. He frequently rode into the ranks on his Cossack horse and knocked the lads about." When His Majesty returned to the palace after the parade, Wagner went boldly up to him on the Green Bridge and handed him a memorial—and a bill for six thousand thalers.

A few days later the King's answer reached him. "Much as His Royal Majesty sympathizes with the unfortunate sufferer, He finds himself not in a position to help with money at present; the Seven Years War cost too much."

Instead of payment, Wagner received the postmastership at Graudenz. In that office he spent the remainder of his days, dreaming of Siberia and of its womenfolk, who were so keen on Germans.

## Chapter 28

### "LA JEUNE SIBÉRIENNE"

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AFTER Catherine's death her son Paul I ascended the throne. Paul, an Oriental despot and Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of Malta, was a passionate devotee of military discipline and parades. This short-nosed autocrat had paroxysms reminiscent of those of Cyrano de Bergerac, the long-nosed Gascon; in all seriousness he challenged Napoleon through the newspapers to a duel with him in the city of Hamburg! He was half mad, and the sane half was not necessarily the better. His despotism was mixed with benevolence; only he followed the teaching of the evangel in not letting his left hand know what the right hand did. With one hand he signed decrees of banishment and with the other he lavished pardons.

Under his rule, however, Siberia continued to add to the density of its population. Columns of prisoners still marched, with their clanking chains, along the road to Siberia, and burial-mounds marked their passage. The conception of political criminal was greatly expanded. Men and women were arrested and deported on the strength of information laid, without ever learning what was alleged against them: on that point the strictest silence was preserved. The German dramatist Kotzebue was an admirer of the Russian autocracy: he gained personal experience of its merits. When he entered Russia he was arrested at the frontier and taken straight to Siberia! It is true that he was soon brought back and loaded with favours. The reason for the unexpected journey was that one of his plays had displeased Tsar Paul.

Count Kapnist, one of Catherine's dignitaries, a very wealthy landowner and a champion of serfdom, had written a comedy called *Scandal*, in which he satirized the bureaucracy. Catherine had prohibited the play; Paul permitted it to be produced. The officials felt injured and laid information against the author. In the morning Paul read the denunciation and ordered the banishment of Count Kapnist to Siberia. In the evening he commanded a performance of *Scandal* at his court theatre, "for the purpose of examination." At the end of the first act a courier went post-haste after the author, caught him up, and brought him back.

The Guards had grown indisciplined; the regiment was filled with spoil darlings, favourites of Catherine and favourites of these favourites. Paul held them in check with an iron hand. Once on



a stroll he met a general who had made his batman carry his sword—a very usual thing under Catherine. Paul stood still and ordered the two to change uniforms there and then, in the road; each held the rank of the other to the end of his life.

For the slightest lack of precision in marching, or for any trivial oversight, officers were sent straight from the parade to Siberia. If they had to go to an inspection by the Tsar they always took plenty of money with them—in case of a long journey.

Tsar Paul had at least sympathetic understanding for the sufferings of a female heart. On July 10, 1800, a certain Maximov, an official of the Holy Synod, was arrested by the chief of police and brought before the Governor-General of St Petersburg. The official, shaking and in a cold sweat, was told His Majesty's command: he was at once to wed Catherine, daughter of the tailor Klockenberg.

By order of the Governor-General the unwilling bridegroom was conveyed under safe escort to Kazan Cathedral. The bride was there already. Two police officers served as witnesses.

The pope asked Maximov the prescribed question: "Dost thou love thy bride?" Maximov replied: "Dearly, by His Majesty's command."

The unusual marriage had resulted from very ordinary circumstances. In the same block of flats as Maximov there lived the respectable tailor Klockenberg and his family. After office hours the synod official had sat at his window playing the guitar. The tailor's daughter sat at her window sewing. When she saw that her love was unrequited she went to the Neva and threw herself in. The police, however, were fully equal to the occasion and pulled her out. The Governor-General mentioned the incident next day in his audience with the Tsar. This was sufficient to secure the happiness of *Fräulein Klockenberg*. The marriage was a happy one and was blessed with numerous progeny.

Under Paul and his son Alexander there lived in Russia many French *émigrés*, driven from their country by the Revolution. Two of the most famous of these were brothers, the Counts de Maistre. The elder, Joseph, was a diplomat, a profound thinker and a brilliant writer; only he unfortunately recommended the Russian Government not to introduce either schools or universities, advice that was thankfully accepted and followed. The other brother, Xavier, refrained from giving advice of any sort; he entered the Russian army, married a Russian woman, and wrote a few thrilling works. One of his romances was regarded in Russia as a classic—*La Jeune Sibérienne*.

It is the story of a young girl, daughter of Captain Lopouloff, "d'une famille noble d'Ukraine." Lopouloff had had a successful

"carrière des armes," had fought in the war and had been decorated; yet one fine day he found himself with his wife and child in the little town of Ishim, in the gubernia of Tobolsk. Nobody knew why he had been banished; the matter had, as usual, been kept strictly secret.

Lopouloff was without means; he was allowed ten kopeks a day (2½d.) for the maintenance of his whole family. His wife and daughter worked as labourers. Little Parasha had a miserable childhood. She came into the world in the year of her father's banishment, and in Siberia she learned neither reading nor writing: her mother had to go to work, and her father was evidently a disciple of Joseph de Maistre. What she did learn was mowing, weeding, and washing. "*Ses mains délicates semblaient avoir été formées pour d'autres occupations.*"

So the years passed in blank hopelessness. Truly, "*une situation déplorable!*" The father's petitions remained unanswered. Mother and daughter only prayed the more fervently.

Then one day the young Parasha—she had completed her fifteenth year—had "*une inspiration de la Providence*": she determined to go to St Petersburg, to throw herself at the feet of the great and powerful Tsar Paul, and to ask him to command a re-examination of the case of her "*cher et malheureux père.*" She was firmly convinced—as we are—of the innocence of the noble, unhappy captain.

For a long time Parasha was unable to bring herself to reveal her plan to her parents. When at last she did so, she was met with a flat refusal, delivered with bitter scorn of the idea. For three years she carried on a struggle with her parents, with hesitant advisers, and with the authorities. But this frail, tender being, still half a child, was made strong by her faith and her love. She prayed and had faith—and succeeded in moving mountains. In the end her father gave way; the authorities granted her a passport, and at the beginning of September, putting in her pocket the whole fortune of the family—"un rouble en argent"—and carrying a sack on her shoulder, she set out on foot on her long, long pilgrimage.

Nobody at Ishim placed any faith in the family's wild enterprise. Nobody came to the aid of the Lopouloffs. Only two of the very poorest of the exiles, simple people, accompanied Parasha for a little while, gave her their blessing, and shyly held out to her their two right hands, with the only help they had to give most willingly offered—thirty kopeks in one right hand and twenty in the other, their whole fortune. But Parasha could not bring herself to take their last shilling—it was just that—from these good people.

What experiences, what sufferings she had on her pilgrimage!

It lasted two years. She fell into the hands of fierce bandits, she froze, she was within a hair's-breadth of drowning, she lost her way. But her "ange gardien" was always at her side. Everywhere there were good souls—"les paysans charitables" put her up for the night, gave her food, and would take nothing in return; drivers gave her a lift, freezing themselves while they took it in turns to lend her their sheepskins. The fierce bandits were so touched when they found only eighty kopeks on her that they themselves smuggled another forty into her little bag.

Invisibly the hand of the Almighty protected her. And in her thankful heart there grew up the resolution that if she was able to free her father from his disgrace she would consecrate herself to God.

She reached Ekaterinburg in mid-winter. A high-born and influential lady "*du caractère le plus obligeant*" sheltered her until spring came. Parasha then continued her journey in the company of a travelling merchant; the girl was now furnished with letters of introduction.

At last she reached St Petersburg. Vainly she tried to present a petition to the Senate. When Parasha saw the gold-uniformed Swiss at the Senate entrance, she naturally supposed him to be the chief Senator, and that was the end of her experience of the Senate: she did not get past the porter's room. But her letters of introduction from her benefactor in Ekaterinburg procured her access to Mademoiselle de S. and Madame la Princesse de T., "*personne respectable et très âgée,*" and, above all, to Monsieur V., private secretary "*de S.M.I. l'Impératrice mère.*" All these personages had their time filled with Government affairs and social obligations, but they were all thoroughly good, noble-hearted, and God-fearing. The hand of God now removed the Swiss from the Senate doors and itself opened the heavy gates of the royal palace to Parasha; the Empress Dowager received her, and in her own exalted person presented "*l'intéressante solliciteuse*" to the Tsar and his consort.

The noble-hearted Tsar could not do things by halves. A command flew to Siberia that Lopouloff should be liberated instantly and that the sum of five thousand roubles should be paid to him; the Senate was enjoined to submit the matter to renewed inquiry. "What more could he do for Mademoiselle Lopouloff?" inquired the Tsar a few days later through M. de K., his Minister of the Interior. "Never should I dare," replied Parasha, bathed in tears, "to solicit the Sovereign's favour for myself; but out there in Ishim there live two simple, amiable souls, suffering innocently with my father."

These two good souls were also liberated.

The end of the story approaches. The happy Lopouloff

parents were soon able to take their Parasha in their arms. By the grace of the Sovereign a new life dawned for them. But Parasha remained true to her vow. Soon the monastery gates closed behind her, and she parted "*pour toujours*" from her distressed parents.

She observed the rules of the nunnery with the same devoutness as everything else that she did. But she was not long able to hold on to life. The starry Siberian nights, the white snowstorms, the icy streamlets—all these had left their mark on her. No person and no circumstance could break her spirit. But an insidious malady destroyed her body. And yet she was so young and so lovely, it would have been difficult at that time to discover "*une physiognomie plus agréable et surtout plus intéressante.*"

On December 8, Saint Barbara's Day, she felt relief; she passed the day peacefully, thinking of her parents. In the evening she prayed in her bed—her strength was no longer sufficient to permit her to fall on her knees. So the night approached.

For some reason the nun attending her left the cell. When she came back, Parasha had departed from this life. Her right hand lay on her breast, as though to make the sign of the Cross. On the kneeling-desk the candle was quietly burning down.

All this may be read in yellowed, musty pages, in old-fashioned type. A pretty little sentimental story—no! That is the point: the story is true. The unfortunate captain, the frail Parasha, the noble-hearted Tsar—it is all exact. But people refused to believe it, it seemed to them too beautiful to be true.

## Chapter 29

### UNREQUITED LOVE

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AMONG the exiles in Siberia the Poles occupied a special place. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they were usually prisoners of war, indistinguishable from the Swedes or Germans. But toward the end of the eighteenth century, when part of Poland was incorporated in the Russian empire, the fighters for Poland's independence changed in the eyes of the Russian Government into "rebels" and "traitors." From that time onward they formed an individual Polish current in the stream of exiles.

It is entirely natural that the attitude of the Russian authorities toward the old Confederates should have been friendlier than later to the "traitors." Many of the exiles of the eighteenth century had established homes in Siberia, and had married Russian women, so that, when Tsar Paul remitted their sentences, in many cases they no longer wanted to return to their homeland.

This was just what happened with the Poles who were taken prisoner among Napoleon's troops. In 1815 they were all permitted to return home; at that time there were nine hundred Napoleonic Poles among the Siberian Cossacks, and a hundred and sixty of these preferred to remain Cossacks for all time.

For fifteen years Siberia then saw no further Polish arrivals. But there came a complete change after Nicholas I ascended the throne. On November 17, 1830, the Polish rebellion broke out. In 1832 the first Polish exiles marched along the roads of Siberia. The march lasted many years. Conspiracies and attempted risings occurred in 1833, 1838, 1840, 1843, 1846, 1848. . . . After each of these attempts the Poles in Siberia were joined by new comrades from their homeland. Not seldom, at this time, the Poles were accompanied by young Russian officers exiled to Siberia (the latter, however, were usually sent to the Caucasus). The official records stated that these officers had "been seduced by Polish beauties, who fanatically demanded of their Russian admirers that they should fight against the constitutional authority of the Imperial Government."

The Poles were sent to various parts of Siberia, under varied conditions. Some lived in freedom, subject only to police supervision; their property was not confiscated; they retained their rank of nobility, received money from their homes, and had an entirely endurable existence. After a short time they were brought

back into European Russia, and soon after that they were permitted to return to their homeland.

More numerous were those of a second category. These suffered the confiscation of their property; a parcel of land was assigned to them in Siberia and an allowance of fifty-seven roubles a year. In consideration of this they were required to transform themselves into Siberian economic pioneers and to become absorbed into the local peasantry.

A third category were put into the convict battalions that guarded the frontier between western Siberia and China. Soldiers who had committed crimes were sent there, including those who had been condemned to death by a court-martial but had been reprieved. The service in these battalions was hard enough. Still worse was the lot of the convicts employed on forced labour. At the head of the Polish risings and rebellions were persons of outstanding social position, wealth, and intelligence; these leaders suffered the heaviest penalties.

On the arrival in 1833 of a detachment of Poles sent to the mines at Nerchinsk, the old commandant of the *katorga* mustered them and addressed them. He put on a stern face and spoke menacingly. He stuck out his chest, raised his voice, and even rattled his sword, which he probably was no longer able to draw. The Poles had not lost all vitality; they still had a sense of humour, and some of them smiled. The commandant noticed it. He stamped, rattled his sword still more violently, and shouted:

"Mark you, once for all, you have come to a place where there is no laughing!"

The Poles at once understood the ominous import of this. The smiles disappeared. But the commandant's anger had passed. He had shown the Poles that he was not to be played with. He now went along the ranks, interrogating each man in turn, and nodding sympathetically: "Ah, ah! Yes, yes, youngsters. . . . Didn't get beaten enough in the days gone by. Now you see where that leads to."

When he had finished his inspection he knew all about all of them. He stopped in front of Podgorodzinsky, a man formerly of great wealth. Pointing to the man next to him, he said:

"That man is a professor; that's easy to understand—out of learning there always come noxious thoughts and foolish actions. But why have you, with your wealth, got mixed up in this business?"

Two worlds were at issue there—the heroism of the fighters for freedom and the cheap sententiousness of a prison governor; the two had to make the best of each other.

In the first period of Polish banishments the treatment was not bad. In many memoirs the Poles themselves are at pains to make

clear that they were not needlessly burdened with heavy labour and were not abused. We must not forget that the convicts were men without rights, and that the officials were strictly forbidden, for instance, to address them with the formal "vui" ("you," as distinct from the familiar "thou"). In the Nerchinsk katorga the Poles formed a mutual aid society; they collected a fine library of three thousand volumes; and alongside the prison they built a chapel which even possessed a small organ.

But neither religion nor humane warders and officials can banish the thought of freedom, especially among men who have to slave with convicts in the mines.

Siberia, the land of gloom, was of infinite extent. Its immeasurable spaces were wildernesses of forest and steppe, ending at last in unknown realms. Freedom was only for the reckless.

Day and night Sierocinsky dreamed of freedom. He had been a Catholic priest in Volhynia; after the rising of 1830 he became a Cossack in Siberia. When a school for Cossacks was opened at Omsk he became the schoolmaster, and was permitted to move freely about the town and its environs.

There was another Polish exile, Dr Szokalsky, living at Omsk. He was a good physician and an admirable man; he treated all who needed treatment, and took no money from them. In his free moments he was filled with the same dreams as Sierocinsky.

The meeting of the two was the birth of a conspiracy. They resolved on nothing less than the starting of a universal revolt in Siberia, the liberation of all convicts and exiles, the instigation of a Tatar rising, the winning over of the garrison of Omsk, and the seizure of the arsenals and the Government funds. After that there was little that would need to be done—the Russian authorities must be arrested and rendered impotent and an independent Siberia proclaimed.

The plan sounds insane. But if we bear in mind that in and around Omsk alone there were some two thousand Poles, that Siberia was full of Russian exiles and convicts, that a considerable proportion of the garrisons was composed of men who were serving sentences and officers who were discontented—there does not seem quite so much madness in the plan. It may be that the idea of an independent Siberia was made part of the objectives of the conspiracy in order to assure its promoters of the support of all these discontented elements. The instigators of the conspiracy had another objective of their own: they meant to fight their way with their compatriots across the Kirghiz steppe to Bokhara and thence to British India.

The conspiracy failed because it had been too comprehensively planned. On the eve of the rising three Poles came to the commandant of the garrison of Omsk and reported to him every-

thing they knew of the conspiracy, and perhaps more than they knew. They described Sierocinsky as the ringleader, and denounced Szokalsky and all the rest.

That same night all the Omsk conspirators were arrested, and information was sent to other places. In the course of the next few days about a thousand persons were arrested. Dr Szokalsky succeeded in escaping with a Pole, Zubtczevsky, and a Russian exile, Meledin, into the gubernia of Orenburg. There, however, they too were caught, and sent back to Omsk, where the judicial investigation was already in full swing.

It lasted three years. The court-martial condemned the six chief defendants, one of whom was the Russian Meledin, to corporal punishment and lifelong forced labour in the mines of Nerchinsk. The rest went into the katorga or were exiled as colonists.

The corporal punishment for Sierocinsky, Szokalsky, and the four others consisted of running the gauntlet. Szokalsky alone survived the ordeal. He had an iron constitution.

When he had recovered, he was sent to Transbaikalia, to the mines, but was not condemned to forced labour. He was soon set free in order to settle there. He gave medical attendance to the settlers, and in return they fed him. He went to rich and poor, to the innocent and the criminals, tirelessly, day and night.

On the way to a patient or back again, on entering or leaving his solitary hut, he had at all times but one thought, for he was physically and morally unbroken. He unfolded to his Polish comrades a new plan of escape. This time he did not propose to wrest Siberia from Russia, but only to gain freedom for himself and his friends. They must break through to the Amur and sail out into the Pacific.

How they would then shift and where they would arrive, he himself did not know. Nor could his friends say. They declared his plan to be entirely impracticable, and then he realized that there was no more hope for him. He loaded an old gun with a rusty nail, pointed the barrel at his heart, and pressed the trigger with his foot.

He lived for a week. When the commandant of the katorga asked him why he had taken his life, he opened his eyes and replied, gazing dimly into an unseen distance:

"Unrequited love."

Was it delirium? Or irony? Neither. He meant the great, unrequited love that had gnawed at his heart all his life. But the beloved's name he withheld from the enemy.

They all had that same beloved, and she called to them unceasingly. Before the investigation into the Sierocinsky-Szokalsky affair was concluded, a Colonel Vysocky started a new



conspiracy. He was working in a distillery at Irkutsk with some other Poles. His plan was scarcely less desperate than Sierocinsky's: he proposed to cross the Sayan range into Dzungaria, to go from there into Turkestan, and then, as Sierocinsky had dreamed, to India. In India were the English, and ships came to them from England.

With six comrades Vysocky fled from the distillery. They escaped from their pursuers, though one of the fugitives was ill and had to be supported on the way by the rest. But their road to India was blocked by the broad, deep river Angara. They put together a raft. When they floated it, it just kept above water, but when they got on to it, it sank with them to the bottom: the damp larch-wood was almost as heavy as the water.

One of them then offered to go in search of a boat. He returned very soon in a fine boat, accompanied by its owner. They got in. The peasant steered the boat skilfully into mid-stream, and then made straight for a spot where Cossacks were lying in ambush, waiting for the Poles. The fugitives tried to sail on, but a volley was fired at them. Vysocky was wounded.

They were sternly punished, and transferred to remote mines in Transbaikalia—all but the one who had betrayed the plan to the authorities, the one who had gone for the boat. Of his fate we know nothing more. Probably he was given his freedom and a new name and thirty pieces of silver with which to start a new life. In any case, he did not return to Poland.

Vysocky was sentenced to a thousand blows in running the gauntlet and to two years' forced labour in the silver-mines. He pushed ore along in a barrow to which he was chained.

The dream of India lived still. An ex-officer, Khlopicky, determined to free Vysocky from the prison, to flee with him through Mongolia to China, and thence to make for the English ships. Four other comrades joined him.

All were poor. Two of them sewed shoes for the officials' wives, the others brought wood from the forest for the factories. As they had no Russian money, they determined to issue their own. One of them was a skilled copper engraver.

They knew how the enterprise might end for them. They kept their secret well. But Khlopicky was married to a Russian woman, and this was a continual source of anxiety to the rest.

Khlopicky concealed the tools from his wife beneath the floor of the lumber-room, but the day came when she discovered them. "What's that for?" she asked her husband, pointing to the home-made hand press.

"For wringing inquisitive people's necks," replied her husband.

Unfortunately he was not so circumspect with his fellow-Poles—for one of them turned informer. Khlopicky and two of his

associates were punished as for an ordinary attempt at escape—they would not have got off so easily had not the Russian woman hidden from the police at the last moment the most incriminating evidence of all.

Vysocky's Indian plan was wrecked and finally abandoned. Two years later he was released from the *katorga* and lived by the mines as an exile. He was a profound, pious man, and his comrades came to him for counsel and consolation. They held him devoutly in honour, and regarded him as their spiritual leader. All that came from him was good in their eyes, even the soap he made. The Poles of all Siberia bought his soap, though it made no lather.

In 1857 he and other participants in the Polish rising were granted their freedom.

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The memory lives still not only in Siberia but in Russia of Albina Migurska, the heroine of Polish unfreedom. Leo Tolstoy has immortalized her in one of his stories. She was a beautiful Polish woman who left her parents' home and estate, ignoring the warnings of relatives, in order to follow her betrothed lover, Migursky, into banishment in Siberia. He had been sent to Uralsk and enrolled in the army. The two were married at Uralsk. Two children were born to them, but died in infancy.

One day Cossacks brought the young wife, from the banks of the Ural, her husband's clothes and a letter in which he bade her farewell.

Albina's despair aroused universal sympathy. All in the town called on her and did their utmost to console her. This was very troublesome, because during these prolonged visits the "suicide" had to crouch in the next room and neither stir nor make a sound.

Albina received permission to return to her people; she then asked to be allowed to take her children's remains with her. She placed them in a coffin—and so concealed her beloved husband.

The coffin with its living corpse was placed beneath the coachman's seat; Albina sat with a Polish maid in the coach and set out homewards. As they entered the province of Saratov the coachman suddenly heard his passenger talking to the dead person. The couple arrived at Saratov as prisoners.

An amnesty on the occasion of the Tsar's marriage saved Migursky from special punishment. He was sent to the *katorga* at Nerchinsk, though not for forced labour but for service in a Cossack battalion. At Nerchinsk, Albina died of consumption.

In 1863 there was another rising in Poland. Like all that had preceded it, it was suppressed. After it, Poles migrated in masses

to Siberia: in the course of three years, nineteen thousand persons were exiled thither.

This time again the Polish banishment was full of slow tortures and tragic outbreaks. The rising by Lake Baikal in 1866 alone was tragic enough in its results. The Poles sent to build the road round the lake disarmed their guards at some points and themselves formed a company of some hundred men. They tried to reach the Chinese frontier, but were surrounded by Cossack detachments, and after a short struggle they had to surrender.

One Russian officer and two Cossacks had fallen; the rebels had lost thirty-one dead; two men escaped.

The court-martial sentenced seven of the ringleaders to death by shooting, and the rest to the *katorga* and to other penalties. Korssakov, the Governor-General, confirmed the death-sentence only in four cases; he reprieved the other three. He did not venture to reprieve all seven, and asked for instructions from St Petersburg. From there he received the reply, "Act as you think fit." This reply took a month to reach him. The sentences imposed by court-martial had had, however, to be carried out within forty-eight hours.

Alexander II was a kind-hearted Tsar. Gradually all sorts of mitigations were granted to the Poles; those on forced labour were permitted to become settlers before their sentences had expired, and settlers were given their freedom. Finally, all the exiled Poles were liberated.

They returned home with their unrequited but undimmed love. And not until many years later did their sons and grandsons learn that this love had been returned.

## DAWN IN ST PETERSBURG

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ON December 26, 1825 (December 14 old style), a group of officers in St Petersburg led part of the garrison into the Senate square, with the intention of bringing down the Government and converting Russia from an absolute monarchy into—

Into what? On that point they were themselves not quite clear. On that point opinions differed.

Many of the young officers had been in central and western Europe during the Napoleonic wars. They had been brought up there, had studied there. Then they had returned to Russia. To gain knowledge of foreign countries is to look at one's own with fresh eyes.

An officer in the immediate entourage of Alexander I brought to Russia in 1817 the statutes of the German "Tugendbund" (League of Virtue). When the idealist youngsters in officer's uniform read these statutes, their eyes were yet further opened. They founded a "Welfare Association."

Toward the end of Alexander's reign two currents were distinguishable among the conspirators. They corresponded to the geographical division of the secret organization into two groups, the "Northerners" round St Petersburg, headed by Muravyev, a captain of the Guards, and the "Southerners," headed by Colonel Pestel.

Captain Muravyev's ideal was the United States of America, with a good constitutional monarch at their head. Colonel Pestel's ideal was something intermediate between the revolutionary Convention and Napoleon.

Nikita Muravyev belonged by birth to an aristocratic Moscow circle with firm religious traditions. He had studied at Moscow University, and had then gone to Paris to complete his studies. There he had lived in the home of the Duke of Coulaingcourt, an aristocrat who had become an officer of the Convention and one of Napoleon's Ministers. This captain of the Guards read Plutarch and Thucydides in the original, and expressed his ideas best in French. He was as devoted to the French Revolution as to the Russian church.

Colonel Pestel was the son of the Governor-General of Siberia. He had been brought up in Dresden and had then passed through the Corps of Cadets in St Petersburg. In 1811 he entered the Guards as an ensign, and in 1812 he fought against the French;

he was wounded at Borodino, and subsequently returned to the field. Ten years later, at the age of twenty-seven, he was in command of a regiment and possessed all the decorations it was possible for an officer of his rank to have.

He wanted to turn Russia into a republic. But he saw the need for a "transition period," during which he proposed the setting up of a dictatorship. In removing the monarchy he considered it necessary to remove the monarch; and in order to avoid complications he regarded it as also desirable to "remove" the whole of the royal family. If Pestel had been in St Petersburg at the time of the Dekabrist's rising, the history of Russia might have taken a different turn. But at that time he was with his regiment in the Ukraine. Other men guided events in St Petersburg.

One of the chief personalities there was Colonel Prince Trubetskoy. He was one of the bravest officers in the Tsar's army. Every detail of his deeds at Borodino, Kulm, and Lützen is known. He was the least fitted of all men to be a conspirator: he would never have dreamed of lifting a finger against his Tsar. And it was this man whom the conspirators chose as "revolutionary dictator!"—for the very reason that he was good-natured, soft-hearted, and incapable of betraying trust in him or endangering the lives of others. Noble, innocent dictator!

Ryleyev was already forty years old when he joined the "Northern Society." He was by then a well-known poet. He came of an officer's family, and was educated in the Cadet Corps. He had reached the higher classes when the corps came under a new commander, a general who possessed the confidence of the Tsar owing to his strictness and his German origin. Discipline had been strict in the Cadet Corps even before his time. But until he came there had been no flogging of cadets; it was left to the new general to introduce that means of education. His name was F. M. Klinger. He was taciturn, surly, and dull; the cadets called him the "Polar bear." Nobody ever saw him smile. He was stern and unforgiving. "I am too kind-hearted," he said, "and I do not intend to allow myself to shrink from administering correction."

"Have you been beaten?" he asked a cadet in his imperfect Russian.

"At your service, sir."

"Beaten well?"

"Yes, Your Excellency."

"Good, you can go," said General Klinger. He was the author of *Sturm und Drang*, the famous work that gave its name to a whole period of German literature.

In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Goethe says of the general's works: "His girls and boys are natural and lovable, his youths radiant."

Well, it was just with these "radiant youths" that General Klinger would have nothing to do until they had had their dose of beating.

Ryleyev was "radiant" throughout his life. General Klinger had been the first to awaken "Sturm und Drang" in his soul, though not by his drama.

Ryleyev's "radiancy," however, did not prevent him from working in the Russo-American Company. He was secretary to the board. The business of the company brought him into touch with Savalishin, then a young and exceptionally gifted naval officer. Savalishin had just returned from his voyage round the world. He had submitted to the Government his project for the acquisition of California. Savalishin, then an ambitious lieutenant of twenty-five, and master of two ancient and six modern languages, explained his project to a meeting of the board of directors of the company, in the presence of the Navy Minister. He had joined the secret society under the influence of Ryleyev.

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The conspirators met in St Petersburg in the house of Count de Laval. The house had a marble staircase and a hall with pillars of Carrara marble. It had a collection of Etruscan vases and Egyptian antiquities, a picture gallery, and a room with a mosaic floor which had been brought from one of Nero's palaces.

All this had been accumulated by an obscure French teacher, son of a wine-merchant of Marseilles who came from an impoverished family of the nobility. He had married his pupil, the granddaughter of a Volga merchant who belonged to the "Old Believers." After his marriage Laval gave up giving lessons and began sending money to London to Louis Bourbon, then a financially embarrassed French *émigré*. When this Louis, in 1814, became King of France, Laval, the ex-teacher of the French language, became a count.

Katharina, the count's daughter, was married to Prince Trubetsky. Neither old Count Laval nor his daughter dreamed that the prince was involved in the conspiracy. To her house came Pushkin, Mickiewicz, Madame de Staël, Joseph de Maistre, Freiherr vom Stein—who was likely in that company to be interested in the young officers' babbling?

In far Ukraine the conspirators met under the hospitable roof of a distinguished old Russian, Rayevsky. Rayevsky was a famous general, hero of the battle of Borodino. His name was a household word in all Russia, from the peasant's hut to the Tsar's palace. "Of such stuff are marshals made," Napoleon had said of him. He was rich and entirely independent. When Pushkin fell out of favour with the Tsar, Rayevsky took him under his protection.

The most beautiful lines of Russian poetry were dedicated to his daughter Maria.

Maria Rayevsky had been married in 1824 to Prince Volkonsky. He was a worthy son-in-law for the old "marshal": he had taken part in fifty-eight engagements, and at the age of twenty-five had been made a general and attached to the suite of Her Imperial Majesty; his uniform was decorated with such a mass of stars and orders that he found it troublesome to wear them all at once. His father was Governor-General of the Trans-Volga region, and his mother Mistress of the Robes to the Tsaritsa; in that capacity she lived with the royal family in the Winter Palace.

Prince Volkonsky, too, had joined in the conspiracy, and neither old Rayevsky nor Maria knew anything about it.

Not far from the Rayevskys' estate were the staff offices of the southern army, and a whole number of regiments were quartered there. Among them was the Vyatka Regiment, of which Pestel was commanding officer. In the top storey of an old house there was a room in which the light burned long after all around was darkness. There the conspirators assembled at a round table.

The young officers were completely under the influence of Pestel's stubborn, dominating personality. Rarely did any of them find the courage to contradict him. "Your dictatorship," a visitor from St Petersburg once said to him, "is bringing a Napoleon among us." "Napoleon," replied Pestel coolly, "was a great man. His rise to eminence was due not to birth but to his talents."

His visitor reddened. "In our time it is better even for the ambitious man, if he has sense, to be a Washington than a Napoleon."

The democratic Washington was the hero of the aristocrats of the North. The Caesarian emperor of the Revolution was the hero of the plebeian Pestel.

He was a dry, reserved man, and trusted scarcely anyone. The only person whom he informed about the conspiracy was a captain of his regiment, Maiboroda, a man of obscure origin, but in Pestel's opinion an "honest democrat."

Alexander I, who had spent much of his time travelling, died unexpectedly on December 18, 1825, in the south of Russia, at Taganrog. His elder brother, Constantine, should have succeeded him, but renounced the throne in favour of his brother Nicholas. This, however, had not been officially announced, and the garrison of St Petersburg had already been sworn to Constantine when the order came for the troops to swear loyalty to Nicholas.

The conspirators knew that the wildest rumours were going about among the soldiers, and that the authorities were at their wits' end. They decided to gain possession of the Senate and the

Winter Palace, to take the Tsar into captivity, and to set up their own Government.

On December 26, the day of the swearing-in, they led their detachments into the Senate square. They amounted in all to about a regiment.

It was cold. The regiment of rebels was drawn up in square formation. In front of it the officers walked up and down. When the Governor of St Petersburg, General Miloradovich, who had been sent to negotiate, rushed up to the scene, Lieutenant Kakhovsky shot him dead with a pistol. After that he shot Colonel Stürler, the officer commanding the Grenadier Guards.

Kakhovsky's shots had cut off all means of retreat. It was necessary now to act—but the conspirators stood still, waiting. Waiting for what? For the adhesion of further units of the army? For a general rising of the people?

But no further units joined them. Instead, reinforcements came for the guards of the Winter Palace, and artillery was brought up along the surrounding streets. Nicholas himself directed its deployment.

It was cold. The soldiers had long been calling for food. In order to raise their spirits and still their hunger, they shouted from time to time: "Long live Tsar Constantine and his consort—Constitution!" They thought "Constitution" was the Tsaritsa.

The conspirators still waited. They waited until the guns had been brought up and trained on them. They waited until the guns were loaded—until Nicholas gave the order to fire.

The guns were loaded with grape-shot. It had little effect, because, according to the captain of the battery, the range was so short. Only four volleys were fired. At the first the square wavered. At the second everyone—soldiers, officers, people—fled. The crowd poured on to the bridge across the Neva. Under the weight of the fleeing mass the bridge collapsed. The people ran on across the ice.

The commander, assured now of victory, gave orders to the battery to fire a salvo of grape-shot into the air, and then to fire a few shots into the Neva. The shots broke the ice at a few places. The commander had acted with good sense, and this day's success brought him the uniform of an A.D.C.

The rebellion was over. Four rounds of grape-shot postponed the fall of the autocracy for ninety-two years.

All this happened in the month of December. And the rebels passed into history as "Dekabrists" (Decembrists).

The arrest of the conspirators began that day and continued during the night. The "dictator" Trubetskoy was arrested in the house of his brother-in-law, Count Lebzeltern, Austrian Minister at the Russian Court. The Minister, a brilliant diplomat



and a friend of Metternich, had married a Countess Laval, sister of Princess Trubetskoy, and so had become one of the richest men in Russia. On December 26 Trubetskoy and his wife had come to Lebzeltern and stayed the night at his house. And it was not till that night that the Austrian Minister learned that he had given asylum to the worst of political criminals. When Metternich heard of it, he promptly informed Lebzeltern that his diplomatic career was at an end.

In the Winter Palace Nicholas interrogated the arrested persons himself. They were already being brought to him from the surrounding country. The first to arrive from the south was Pestel. He had actually been arrested on December 25—denounced by Captain Maiboroda, the "honest democrat." A few days after Pestel, his closest associate in the conspiracy, Lieutenant-Colonel Muravyev-Apostol, was arrested. His comrades and fellow-conspirators among the officers liberated him by force and compelled him to set himself at the head of the conspiracy, a position for which he was completely unfitted. To have been born in Spain and educated in France, to read Aristophanes in the original, to be a brave officer, and to write mystical verses—all these things, good as they are in themselves, were not sufficient qualification for the leadership of a military rebellion.

He marched his regiment against the staff of the army corps. There was an engagement while they were on the march. The rebels were defeated. Muravyev received a slight wound and fell from his horse. His younger brother saw him fall. He imagined him to be dead, and there and then put a bullet through his own head.

The trial was concluded fairly quickly. The court did not even see or hear the defendants. It merely divided them into "categories" according to the degree of their guilt. While the trial was still proceeding the judges were informed that the Tsar would confirm no sentence that involved "the shedding of blood."

Nevertheless, the court sentenced five of the rebels to death by quartering and thirty-one to death by beheading; the remainder were sentenced to various periods in the *katorga* and to banishment to Siberia.

Nicholas had promised to shed no blood, and he kept his word. The beheadings were converted into the *katorga*, and the quarterings into hanging.

The gallows seemed the final logical conclusion of Colonel Pestel's unsuccessful career. Ryleyev's last "*Sturm und Drang*" brought him, too, to the same end. Under the gallows Muravyev-Apostol caught a glimpse of the "*grand trait de lumière*," the broad shaft of light of which he had dreamed in the years of his youth. On the gallows the "*Russian Brutus*," the fearless

Lieutenant Kakhovsky, ended his life. And the resolute Captain Bestushev-Ryumin experienced on the gallows his "moment of liberation."

At dawn on July 13, 1826, they were taken to the crown-work of the fortress of Peter and Paul. Five gallows had already been erected. The rest of the condemned persons were also taken there. It was a pallid northern day, white as the Arctic night, white and misty. The wood fires flamed and smoked.

The condemned men were in full parade uniform, bright with epaulettes, decorations, and stripes. The whole of these decorations were torn off and thrown into the fires. The uniforms followed. The men were ordered to kneel down; two gendarmes came up to each in turn and broke his sword above his head.

There was no executioner to be found in St Petersburg, and one had to be brought from Sweden. This man proved to have very little knowledge of his craft; he only understood beheading. The hanging was successful at once only with the pedantic Pestel and the resolute Bestushev-Ryumin. The nooses for the other three broke; they fell to earth groaning. Muravyev's fall broke his leg. Ryleyev commented between his set teeth, "You can't even hang a man."

One of the officers of the gendarmerie hurried to General Chernyshev, who was in charge of the execution. Trembling and stammering, he exclaimed:

"Your Excellency, if we report it to His Majesty . . . he would . . . reprieve . . ."

Chernyshev gave no reply; he rushed to the gallows and shouted: "Make an end of it at once!"

The "at once" lasted half an hour. During this half-hour the band of the Guards, stationed on the rampart, played military marches, while General Chernyshev rushed up and down on his horse, his lorgnette in his hand, and urged the witnesses to keep up their spirits. They needed his encouragement, for General von Benckendorff, commander of the gendarmerie, lay prone in the saddle, his face buried in his horse's mane, and the military chaplain who had had to accompany the condemned men lay on the ground crying again and again: "Forgiveness . . . redemption!"

For his special services in the matter of the Dekabrists General Chernyshev was raised to the rank of Count.

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Eleven days later the first eight prisoners were sent off in chains to Siberia. Their pilgrimage took them beyond Lake Baikal. It became a triumphal procession. The population, the officials, the local authorities, all were unable to do enough to show their

sympathy. Special meals were arranged in their honour, meals the hosts would have been glad to make banquets. The chief of police of Tobolsk gave a dinner which included twelve different Siberian fish courses. At Irkutsk the merchants loaded the prisoners with gifts.

At the famous town of Kainsk the town gaoler came to meet them with two servants who carried a gigantic basket filled with wine and every possible variety of eatables. These gifts were thankfully accepted.

When the servants had gone away, the town gaoler brought out of his pocket and laid on the table a fat wad of banknotes. He laid his hand on his heart, and spoke with tears welling in his eyes. "Please, for God's sake, take it! Not quite honest earnings, you see! Bribes, bribes. Yes—take it! It will ease my conscience!"

At first the prisoners were taken to the mines at Blagodatsk and distributed among the pits. Each one of them was assigned an experienced convict as instructor; each of these pairs received a lantern with a tallow candle, a shovel, and a hammer.

The days passed. The money they had ventured to bring with them soon came to an end. The work grew grimmer. They were taken from the mines to the surface, and now had to drag along heavy loads of ore. Their chains were not removed by day or by night.

Romantic princes! Utopians of the Guards! They realized at last that the world was not to be changed by words and dreams. For that it needed miracles and deeds: failing these, it remained as it was. They stood at the foot of Golgotha.

They would never have had the physical or mental strength to hold out if their wives had not come to their aid. These wives, who had taken no part in the struggle, *tertiæ lacrimosæ*, won through to victory.

The sentence to the *katorga* meant civil annihilation. The condemned person lost his rank of nobility, his property went to his heir, he lost the rights of a husband and father. He lost his place in the world—a successor could occupy it.

When the wives of the Dekabrists determined to follow their husbands to Siberia, that meant that they, too, accepted civil annihilation.

The first of them to follow her husband was Princess Trubetskoy. She endured the whole calvary of Parasha, the "jeune Sibérienne," only in the reverse direction. Her mother implored her on her knees not to go. Friends and relations produced every possible argument from "common sense." They made not the slightest impression. In the count's daughter, who was half a Frenchwoman and was granddaughter of an "Old Believer" from the Volga, there dwelt the soul of those Russian women, those

ladies-in-waiting Morosova and Urussova, who had died under torture for their convictions.

At the end of July 1826 she left Moscow for St Petersburg. There she was received by the Tsaritsa. The sister of the King of Prussia wept with the wife of the Russian convict. The Tsar gave permission to Princess Trubetskoy to travel to Siberia; he gave permission also to the other wives. But a royal messenger was sent post-haste to Siberia with the command to the authorities "to do everything possible to deter the wives of the Dekabrist from carrying out their intention."

The secretary of the princess's father travelled with her to Siberia. At Krasnoyarsk he fell ill. She went on alone. Her coach broke down on the way. She hired a peasant's cart.

At Irkutsk the old Governor Zeidler conscientiously did his best to obey the command "to deter the wives of the Dekabrist from carrying out their intention." He pictured to the young wife the life she would lead among five thousand convicts. But she insisted on using her promised pass to Transbaikalia.

Next day she was informed that she must sign a renunciation of her rights of nobility and of all her possessions, real and personal, and also of all that might come to her by inheritance. Princess Trubetskoy signed the document without wasting a word on it.

Next day she was not received by the Governor. The princess waited. When Zeidler did receive her, he pointed out to her that she herself would have to take the position of a woman convict in the *katorga*. This, too, had no effect on her. He explained to her that the prison administration could demand from her the performance of rough work—cleaning floors, washing dirty linen. "Give me my pass, I am ready for anything!" was her reply.

"You cannot go any farther by cart, we must send you on on foot with a gang of convicts, we must chain you with them to the prut!"

The princess rose. "Choose the people," she said. "I will go on foot with them."

The old official rose also. He pulled out his chequered handkerchief, trumpeted with his nose, and turned away. When he had cleared his throat he was able to say:

"It shall be as you wish, Princess. And you shall ride."

On January 27, 1827, she left Irkutsk. It was so cold that her tears froze on her cheeks.

As soon as Lake Baikal had been passed she was caught up by Princess Volkonsky. This princess was five years younger than Princess Trubetskoy—she was only twenty-one years old. What struggles she had had to fight! Old Rayevsky acknowledged the courage and the purity of motive of his son-in-law, but he would not allow his daughter to join him. It had not been easy to go

against the "marshal's" wishes. He argued, demonstrated, implored. When his daughter left his home to go to St Petersburg, his eyes sparkled menacingly beneath his bushy grey eyebrows, and he exclaimed:

"If you don't change your mind I shall curse you!"

All this she had had to undergo after giving birth to a baby and after subsequent high fever. In that fateful December she had given her baby son into the care of an aunt and set out for St Petersburg. At Christmas she had started from there on her journey to Siberia.

As the covered sleigh was starting a servant handed her a letter. It was from her father. "It is snowing; may you have a good journey and keep well. I pray to God for you, innocent victim, that He may comfort your soul and give strength to your heart. . . ."

The old soldier had surrendered—for the first time in his life.

The Princesses Trubetskoy and Volkonsky were followed by other women to Siberia. In the past they had been of very different stations; destiny made them all equal. All of them now washed clothes, swept floors, and darned their husbands' shirts. Muravyev's wife, *née* Countess Chernyshev, did this, and Naryshkin's, *née* Countess Konovnitsyn, and von Wiesen's, *née* Apukhtin, and Davydov's, not *née* anything, but a former serf with whom Davydov had fallen in love and whose freedom he had bought.

The Frenchwoman Le Dantu, who had secretly and hopelessly loved the comrade of her childhood, whose governess her mother had been, found her happiness in the katorga—like another Frenchwoman, Mademoiselle Paul, a little dressmaker who had been the "friend" of the magnificent Annenkov, one of the officers of the Guards: in Siberia she stood with him before the altar.

A special department was set up for the supervision of the Dekabrists. It was placed under General Leparsky. A strange man! A Pole by birth, he had been placed in charge as a young man of the first transport to Siberia of Kosciuszko's Confederates. Now Nicholas gave him charge of the Dekabrists. The Tsar summoned him and shut himself up with him for an hour in his study. What did the two have to discuss?

Leparsky was then seventy years old. He picked up his old bones and gathered together many little drinks and mixtures and went off to Siberia. He settled by the mines. Instead of chains he wore a sword and spurs—and his life differed in no other respect from that of the Dekabrists. Promotions and ribbons and stars flew to him from St Petersburg. Had he really sacrificed the evening of his life to the Tsar for those?

In 1827 the Dekabrists were taken to Chita, where they spent three years. In 1830 a new prison was built for them by the Petrovsky works. Leparsky had not made a good choice of site: the soil was marshy. The prisoners, who had to perform heavy labour in the mines, suffered severely from illnesses.

Leparsky was harsh at first. He maintained the strictest discipline. But the young wives went to see him. They talked to him without caring about prison discipline.

"Do you want to get me imprisoned with your husbands?" he asked, half won over already.

"Well, what of it?" they answered. "You would be in good company!"

Three years after her arrival in Siberia, Maria Volkonsky heard that her child had died.

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Time passed. White nights and misty days succeeded one another in St Petersburg. The Winter Palace sent out a blaze into the cold light. On the same square in which the "Russian Brutuses" had fed the "tyrant's" cannon with their own flesh, parades were held. General Chernyshev added to his title of count that of prince. He no longer carried a lorgnette, for that was not Tsar Nicholas's style. The old Princess Volkonsky, still Mistress of the Robes, was given the brilliants of the Order of Saint Catherine as consolation for her son's condemnation to the *katorga*. General Benckendorff was made a count, and Pushkin wrote his drama *Boris Godunov*. He read it to an assemblage in the house of Count Laval, not far from the Senate square. Count Lebzelttern had at last received from Metternich an appointment to a minor diplomatic post.

Meanwhile the Dekabrists were extracting ore and praying to God. Their wives lived near them as exiles. There had even come into existence a "Ladies' Road." In it lived princesses, countesses, ladies-in-waiting—of the past. Nicholas did not permit them to receive in banknotes from Russia more than a thousand roubles a year, equivalent in hard coin only to fifty silver roubles. They lived in peasants' huts. When Princess Volkonsky lay down at night on her straw mattress, her head touched the wall and her feet could reach the door. The windows, as everywhere in Siberia, were not of glass but of mica. Of the money the wives received they gave most to their husbands. They kept back barely enough for food, and if it would not buy white bread they ate black. So they lived, year after year, and no one heard a word of complaint from them.

Some of the Dekabrists who were considered less guilty lived in freedom, but at "remote places" and under police supervision.

A few had good fortune. One Dekabrist, Semyonov, met Alexander von Humboldt on his journey through Siberia in 1829. When Humboldt was received in audience by Tsar Nicholas, he told the Tsar of this highly cultured man passing his life uselessly in remote seclusion. Semyonov was later given a post that did full justice to him as a Doctor of Political Science and a man with a command of four languages—he was commissioned to keep clean the police office in the town of Ust-Kamennogorsk.

Nicholas similarly improved the lot of the poet Prince Odoyevsky and the novelist Bestushev-Marlinsky, a famous writer of the last century: he transferred them to soldiering in the Caucasus, where both of them perished.

Nicholas attentively watched the destiny of his "*amis du quatorze*," as he called the Dekabrists—his friends of December 14 (old style). His feelings toward them are difficult to comprehend. When he shut himself up in his study with Leparsky he is said to have asked him to show that he, Nicholas, "had a heart."

In 1845 the Dekabrist Yentaltsev died, and his widow tried to get permission to return to Russia. Nicholas gave orders that she should be reminded that when she followed her husband to Siberia she forfeited all right to return. The unhappy widow lived eleven more years in Siberia.

Yet—every month a courier went from Siberia to St Petersburg with a full report on the condition of the Dekabrists. After he had read the report Nicholas sent the courier back. Every time he did so, he took from his writing-desk a substantial sum of money that had been placed there in readiness, and handed it to the courier with instructions to buy tea and tobacco for the "criminals" with it. In doing so he fixed his leaden gaze on the courier and said: "Woe to you if a single living soul learns who gave you the money!" No living soul learned it in Nicholas's lifetime.

After completing their sentence of six, eight, or ten years in the *katorga*, the Dekabrists were permitted, by the grace of the Tsar, to become settlers. Like all settlers, they were granted fifteen *dessiatines* of land apiece, and they set to work.

Their work left its traces in Siberia. The Dekabrists Bestushev and Torson, in collaboration with Polish exiles, built the first oil-mill in Transbaikalia. They brought in pedigree sheep to improve the breed. Bestushev, an exceptionally versatile man, improved the agricultural implements and invented an excellent two-wheeled cart which the Siberians use to this day. Colonel Pogio, with Bestushev and Küchelbecker, taught the inhabitants of Chita to grow asparagus, cauliflower, and the like—vegetables which had never been seen in that region before the time of the Dekabrists. Tiesenhausen introduced new sorts of vegetables in Yalutorovsk. Naryshkin taught the inhabitants of Kurgan to

cultivate peas, and improved their breed of horses. Batenkov, a military engineer, sketched the general plan for the topographical mapping of Siberia. Savalishin, an ex-lieutenant of the navy, developed a small but exemplary estate near Chita.

Captain Yakushkin founded a school at Yalutorovsk, in which two hundred children were taught, including those of all the local officials. So great was the fame of the school that teachers were sent to it from all over Siberia to learn the art of teaching from Yakushkin. The authorities of the gubernia of Tobolsk, who wanted to maintain this school, concealed from the Tsar Yakushkin's "illegal" activity.

So passed thirty years. In 1856, at the coronation of the new Tsar Alexander II, a complete amnesty was granted to all Dekabrists. Of those who were still alive, only three continued thereafter to live in Siberia, Savalishin among them. The rest returned home to Russia. They returned as white-haired patriarchs.

Two years before the amnesty, Princess Trubetskoy died at Irkutsk. The fascinating Alexandrine Muravyev had died already, in Transbaikalia. Maria Volkonsky returned, an old woman, with her husband. She was fifty-six years old; her little feet that had once been sung by Pushkin were still small, but distorted by rheumatism.

The "*amis du quatorze*" ended their days in peace on their estates or in their homes—in so far as these were restored to them or placed at their service by their heirs. Their days drew quietly to a close, but not painlessly. One after another they went to join their wives or comrades in the next world. They remained dreamers to the end of their lives, and died in the naive belief that one day, in spite of all, there would rise over their graves for the living generation "*the dawn of a magical happiness.*"

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# REALITY

## Chapter 31

### THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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TIME went by more slowly in the distant taiga and tundra than in the pleasant homes of Europe. Often it seemed not to be moving at all. But human passions moved none the less. Hunger and love, dreams and lust for power, determined the course of history in Siberia as elsewhere. Two centuries had passed since Yermak's victories and downfall when Siberia entered the nineteenth century.

This century fed on iron and coal, lived in stock exchanges, newspapers, and Parliaments, and pursued progress through colonial wars.

Siberia lay at the back of Russia's house like a vast store-cellar, a cellar half-filled with ice and with only one door—the Urals—and in place of windows two narrow slits, Kyakhta and Okhotsk. From the rest of Asia it was parted by two Cyclopean walls of mountain and desert, from the Pacific by the gigantic Stanovoy range. A barrier of ice formed its northern frontier. Kamchatka and Alaska were virtually inaccessible. No road led out of Siberia.

It was possible to do without an exit so long as Siberia was a cellar to which the "dregs of Russia" were dispatched and from which only those things were extracted that could be produced by crude and primitive means of exploitation. The new century, however, raised new problems. It brought the rest of the world to the coasts of Siberia. It had already begun to turn the vast ocean beyond those coasts from a Pacific into an ocean of war. The new century also changed Siberia itself.

The two-centuried epic of passions came to its end. Like a man who is entering a ripe old age, Siberia began to live for realities. More precisely, it ceased to be a mere colony and began to establish its claim to economic development for its own benefit.

Moscow, and later St Petersburg, was keenly interested in Siberian industry. One of the first governmental activities in Siberia had been the introduction of the fur monopoly. Even before this, Ivan the Terrible had empowered the Stroganovs, in his charter of 1574, to prospect in Siberia for iron, copper, lead, and sulphur. Throughout the seventeenth century the Government had required the voyevods to search for ores, mica, sulphur, and precious stones; it had instructed them to pursue the search

for medicinal plants and to report on fishes and birds and all kinds of animals. Khabarov had asked the mysterious old woman Mazalchan about ores, and Golovin before signing the treaty of Nerchinsk had tried to gain information about ores from Tungus hunters. In the Altai and in Transbaikalia the natives had shown the Russians ancient shafts, overgrown by century-old trees, and in the shafts were primitive tools, vestiges of ore, and skeletons of miners.

Not until the time of Peter the Great was the search for ores crowned with success. In 1700 the Nerchinsk mines started working the tin and silver deposits of Nerchinsk, and four years later Henning, then director of mines for Siberia and the Urals, reported to the Tsar the smelting of the first pound and a half of silver.

Mazalchan had spoken the truth to Khabarov. Beneath the soil of Dauria were gold, silver, lead, tin, iron, zinc, wolfram, pit coal, and precious stones.

In Peter's own day Akinphi, son of the famous Ural pioneer Nikita Demidov, had prospected for ores in the Altai mountains. He very soon discovered rich deposits. Akinphi Demidov started work at once on a large scale. He engaged miners from Saxony, and with their aid he became in ten years the owner of seventeen copper mines and thirty gold, silver, and lead mines in the Altai. In 1745, under his management, the first Siberian gold was refined. It was only a by-product of silver extraction, and the quantity obtained was not great.

Not until the beginning of the nineteenth century was true gold-bearing sand discovered at Nerchinsk. The Government immediately declared it a State monopoly. Private individuals were even prohibited at the outset from prospecting. This was first permitted in 1826, and ten years later the private working of gold finds was permitted, but on condition that all gold won should be delivered to the State exchequer.

What profit did the State draw from this gigantic colony? At first the chief revenue came from tribute in furs exacted from the natives. Since Peter the Great's time there had also been silver and copper. Of still more importance later were the Customs duties on trade with China and the taxes paid by Siberian merchants. A handsome revenue was yielded also by licences for the sale of vodka. Against all this the State had to maintain an enormous staff of officials, who received double the Russian rates of pay; it kept troops at the frontiers, maintained such roads as existed, and since the eighteenth century it had maintained the hungry natives at its own expense; finally it met the deficit on the State mines—for the longer these worked the poorer was the yield. The principal revenue, the fur tribute—the famous “yassak”—had fallen almost to nothing with the progressive extermination of furred animals.

If, in spite of all this, the State drew relatively little from Siberia, on the other hand there were a large number of people for whom it had a "golden soil." This was true especially, as in all colonies, of the officials.

To say nothing of the old Siberian voyevods! They had been sent to Siberia to "line their pockets," and nobody dreamed of quarrelling with the system.

Peter the Great made an end of the distribution of Siberia into voyevodships, and gave the country a unified "Siberian Government." He appointed the ex-voyevod of Nerchinsk, Prince Gagarin, as the first Governor. With the appointment the prince's fortune began to swell enormously. He built himself a palace at Tobolsk out of his own resources; there he held "court" and maintained a theatre and an orchestra of his own. At ceremonial banquets the courses were served in silver dishes; he himself ate from gold plate. The wheels of his coach were silver-mounted. He built himself a still more magnificent palace in Moscow. There were rooms of which the walls were entirely covered with mirrors, and the ceilings were of glass: the astonished Muscovites saw fishes swimming over their heads!

Among his jewellery was the most precious ruby in the world. It had been sent to the Governor from China. He passed it on to Prince Menshikov, who in turn presented it to Catherine I, Peter's consort.

Probably this ruby was only one of many presents sent by the all-powerful voyevod to his patrons at St Petersburg. He felt completely secure; only he forgot that, after all, Russia was ruled not by Catherine and Menshikov but by Peter the Great. The prince's luxurious life attracted the Tsar's attention. "Where does all this come from?" he asked. An official "revizor" was sent to Siberia, followed immediately by a secret one—Pashkov, the Tsar's "boy," which meant in reality his private secretary, though his duties included pulling off the Tsar's top-boots and also, after too prolonged a session at table, putting the Tsar to bed.

As was to be expected, the official revizor found nothing reprehensible in Prince Gagarin's conduct, and began on his return from Siberia to feed his own friends from silver dishes. Pashkov, however, not only reported to the Tsar what was going on in Siberia but brought documents and witnesses. The revizor paid with his head for deceiving the Tsar. Prince Gagarin was brought to trial, tortured, whipped, and hanged in St Petersburg in the Senate square.

After Gagarin's execution Peter offered the Governorship to his friend Grigori Stroganov. But Grigori declined. He could get his pockets lined at home. His wealth was immeasurable. Of Anika's three sons only Semyon's line had continued unbroken;

those of his two elder brothers, Grigori and Yakov, had died out in the second and the third generation. Everything had come down to Grigori, Anika's great-great-grandson—all the possessions accumulated in the course of a hundred and fifty years by the descendants of the colonizer of Perm.

No, Grigori had no need of "pickings"—none of the Stroganovs had ever gone in search of them. He did not go to Siberia. Instead, Prince Cherkatsky became Governor. His father had been a voyevod in Siberia and had brought back fabulous wealth from there. The son was a man of iron nerve, and in spite of the bitter end to which Prince Gagarin had come, he too lost no time in Siberia. "No one came back empty-handed from Siberia," casually remarks his biographer.

His only daughter became the wife of Count Sheremetev. The count claimed ownership of seventy thousand peasants and a corresponding area of land; Princess Cherkatsky brought him as her dowry a further eighty thousand peasants and lands that occupied almost half the province of Moscow. The happy pair owned the most extensive estates in all Russia.

Really magnificent was Count Sheremetev's palace near Moscow. Venetian mirrors, Carrara marble, and malachite from the Urals competed with the most precious of French Gobelins; in the armoury hung Damascene blades in golden sheaths; the park was ornamented with artificial ponds, Chinese pagodas, waterfalls, fountains, grottoes, ruins; in the orangeries blossomed laurel and orange trees; in the zoo were tigers, lions, bears, and giraffes, while six hundred stags roamed at large.

On this estate he received Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, who travelled incognito as Count Falkenstein. Catherine II sat at his table, and in addition to the host and his royal guest fifty-eight other guests ate off golden plates and drank from golden goblets. In front of the Empress a cornucopia stood on a massive pedestal; both were of pure gold, and on the cornucopia the Empress's coat-of-arms was picked out in brilliants. In the adjoining halls two thousand guests feasted. After the banquet an opera was produced in the count's private theatre—"The happy Shepherd; or, The Jealous man himself aids the Lover." Count Ségur, the French Minister, devotes the most eloquent pages of his memoirs to this festival. "The thing that most struck me," he writes, "was that the composer and the librettist, the architect who built the theatre, the painter who decorated it, the actors and actresses, the ballet dancers, and the musicians of the orchestra, were all the property of Count Sheremetev."

So they all still stood until shortly before the Revolution, the coy nymphs, the melancholy ruins, the delightful pergolas along the quiet, romantic river. Men knew how to live amid beauty in

the age of Catherinian magnificence. The captivating nonchalance of the Russian rococo smiles at us with the gentle, gracious smile of the irrecoverable. Was it not worth while to harness all Siberia to the service of that smile? Was it not truly said that Siberia is a rich and fair country?

But there were others—honest and capable administrators. In Peter's time there was William Henning, the head of the mining and smelting department; there was the voyevod Ssaltykov; Governor Ssoimanov; Kushelev, commandant of Kamchatka; Ssuvorov, "commander" of the works at Nerchinsk, father of the general who later became famous; there was the Governor-General Speransky, the famous legislator under Alexander I, who swept across Siberia like a storm, but at the end of three years' struggle threw up his hands in despair—"To introduce legality into Siberia—hopeless! Have there ever been any laws here?"

There were beyond question many others who did not think only of their own interests—how otherwise would it have been possible that Siberia should show economic advance as it did; that it should have prosperous peasants and Cossacks who were loyal to their Tsar; and that the natives should not have been finally exterminated by merciless pioneers? One thing we should not forget: with the support of the Orthodox church, the Administration fought against adventurers of all sorts in defence of the poor "savages." Many times the traders demanded the introduction of slavery in Siberia, but the Russian Government never permitted it.

The traders of Siberia regarded themselves, however, as its lords and masters—and not without reason. They were the economic pioneers of Siberia. They financed the groups of Cossacks that had conquered in the course of a few dozen years a country greater than the Roman Empire. They imposed tribute on the natives on their own initiative, and later shared it with the Tsar. They were cruel and merciless. They were not greatly concerned how they treated either natives or Russians.

In the nineteenth century these successors of Poyarkov and Atlasov no longer robbed and murdered. They traded, and their one thought was to tolerate no competitor. They carried on a typical monopoly business.

From whom could an Aleutian buy powder, shot, a fishing-net, or a bottle of vodka? Only from the Russo-American Company. For it he must deliver as many furs, or work as many days, as the seller demanded of him. In the Yakutsk region the trader Charikov sold his goods on credit, of which the buyers did not even ask the terms. Silently they took their goods and went away; they knew that Charikov would appear at the appointed time and collect his dues. In this way, especially by sale on

credit, the trading houses of Kandinsky and Butin built up their millions of capital in Transbaikalia. A merchant named Saltanov gained control of the Turukhansk region. He forbade the natives to buy from any other merchant; he bought and sold his own traders, and when a smallpox epidemic broke out in the region he declared that the property of the dead passed to him—for all the inhabitants without exception were in his debt! At Irkutsk, under Governor Pestel, three merchants concluded an agreement—"In the city of Irkutsk no one but ourselves or those authorized by us may deal in meat."

The struggle of the authorities with the trading community often took on strange and thoroughly Siberian forms. Toward the end of the eighteenth century a merchant and industrialist named Sibiriakov, owner of a silver-mine in the Nerchinsk region, became exceptionally wealthy. Naryshkin, the mining "commander," a godson of Catherine II, continually "borrowed" substantial sums from Sibiriakov, but forgot to repay them. On one occasion Naryshkin asked for five thousand roubles.

"Old man," said the merchant, "I gave you three thousand only last month."

"Is that the way you talk to me?" retorted Naryshkin. "Very well, I will deal differently with you."

That day he had Sibiriakov's house surrounded by soldiers and two cannon trained on it. An ultimatum was addressed to its owner. In reply he appeared on the entrance steps of his house with a silver dish in his hands; on the dish lay a neat package of banknotes.

"That's the style, old chap," shouted Naryshkin. "Now come along and have a drink!"

The soldiers were sent back to barracks, and the "friends" drank together till morning came.

Toward the end of the thirties the ranks of the merchants were swelled by gold prospectors. The "fur age" in Siberian history was then drawing to its close, and the "gold age" was beginning. At first gold was extracted only in the Nerchinsk region. Then it was found in the Yenisei taiga, and then in the valleys of the Lena and the Vitim. The gold lured prospectors in the same direction in which the sables and foxes had lured them—farther and farther east. It lured them into the impenetrable marshes of the taiga, into the ravines and gorges of the mountain streams, into regions in which there was no food, in which the mosquitoes literally ate up everything that lived—even horses—and in which men were glad to come upon the vestiges of a bear's meal—fishes' heads, which the epicure of the forest despised. Yet men went thither, entrepreneurs big and little, peasants, freelance Cossacks, escaped convicts, runaway soldiers. Workings were started; there was no lack of labour. Prospecting went on in primitive fashion,

relying on flair and on appearances. Prospectors came to grief—alone or in whole groups—finding nothing; if anything was found, it was shared in accordance with the rule of the taiga.

A bold prospector appeared with a crowd of workers in the valley of the Aktolik, in the Yenisei region. He staked a claim and dug a well five feet in diameter. The digging was laborious work, because the well continually filled with water, the country being marshy. When they had dug out the soil and washed it they saw in the sieve a handful of golden grains.

In his enthusiasm the prospector named his digging "Good Luck." He worked there for two years, until he had come to the end of his resources. He had lost his money and his health, and went away, leaving "Good Luck" to its fate.

Some years later another man appeared at the same spot. He brought twenty workers, and in a year washed a whole pood of gold, thirty to forty pounds' weight, out of the soil.

Next year he came with fifty workers, but obtained only a few ounces of gold. He went on mining for five years, spent his whole pood, and was left penniless. Early in the autumn his workers wanted to leave, but he persuaded them to work on for one more week. When they came on the Saturday evening to settle up with him, they saw their employer hanging from a branch of an old cedar. Neither in his pockets nor in his tent was there a single kopek to be found.

No one again ventured to try this gold-mine. But meanwhile other prospectors had been at work up and down the stream, attracted by the fame of that single pood of gold. "Good Luck" now lay desolate, disordered, dismal. So it remained for several years. But one day a new owner appeared—an ailing man, with unsteady glance and with three front teeth missing. He had been sent to Siberia from somewhere in the south of Russia, and had already had a long experience of prison.

Nobody had any idea what he was searching for on that accursed spot. He was laughed at. What seemed particularly ridiculous was that the new mine-owner began work with only two helpers, after gangs of fifty had already been employed in vain. Yet the newcomer showed himself a genuine prospector—and a cleverer one than his predecessors. Very soon the workers brought him gold—only they were not his workers, and it was not his gold: they sold it to him for vodka. A few years later he was the owner of some real gold-mines.

The unknown soldiers of the gold dream came to the taiga and came to grief. They disappeared, to the last man, and left no trace. The "secret" was known only to the heroes of the stopping-places on the way. They knew how to get gold—not from the soil but from other men's pockets. In the middle of the



nineteenth century there were many of these heroes in Siberia. They bought a shaft for next to nothing from natives or wayfarers, collected any sort of labour they could recruit, and sent the men to the shaft. When gold-mining was permitted on State property, real gold capitalists soon appeared. Most of them had never had mines of their own, had never even seen Siberia. Men who had business connexions in St Petersburg—or with the Siberian authorities—received, in the form of “abandoned” or “unsuitable” parcels of land, gold-bearing sites; they sent their representatives to the sites, to feed the mosquitoes of the taiga on their blood and in their turn to suck the strength and the energy from peasants and tramps.

It was not easy, however, to get the better of the peasants. Only ne’er-do-wells, only the most hapless of all, were to be had for the hard labour in the mines. In the course of two and a half centuries Siberia had been dotted from the Urals to the Amur with Russian settlements. The settlers had pushed fearlessly along the river valleys northward to the icy tundra; they had crept southward to the Kirghiz steppes, they had climbed the slopes of the Altai mountains, and had crossed the Chinese frontier. They were the descendants of the first colonists, exiled or settled peasants, “Old Believers” and every sort of rebels; but the great bulk of them were peasants who had gone of their own free will to Siberia in search of land and freedom. In Siberia there was no serfdom, there were no big landowners!

Thus Siberia had become not only the land of exile and of gloom but also the land of freedom and of daring. Free and energetic men had gone there, and the Siberian peasant was never so oppressed and depressed as the Russian. These free men extended the limits of the Russian colonization on all sides. The Government not only gave them no support, but even fought against this elemental outward pressure. In the eighteenth century it threatened the knout as the penalty for unauthorized movement beyond the frontier—and carried out its threat. But in spite of everything the Russian troops, wherever they went, found Russian villages which had come into existence without authority. Their inhabitants traded and fought with the natives and concluded treaties of peace with Chinese, Kalmuk, and Kirghiz chieftains—and then became Russian subjects once more, because the frontiers of the State had overtaken them. “Who gave you permission to settle here?” asked the commanders of the Russian frontier posts. “What does it matter to you?” replied the peasants. “We are not living on your land!”

It was a peculiar land, with special types of people and special customs. The peasants were free and in most cases prosperous.

Every peasant was not only a landowner but a merchant. Both the peasants and the Cossacks knew all about trading with the natives; and all of them kept their eyes open in their leisure hours in search of any traces of gold in the neighbourhood. They were ready to deal with a bear in single combat, and they had no fear either of the cold or of escaped convicts or even of the authorities in the towns. They were sharp-sighted and resourceful. Colonel de Belcourt, who was in Siberia at the same time as Benyovsky, remarks in his book: "The Siberians are such rogues that they could get the better of the subtlest Italian."

They knew how to live well. At the beginning of the nineteenth century a local superintendent of police transferred from Russia reported to his superiors that he had found a curious perversion among the population "of the district entrusted to me": on feast-days the women and girls went about in Chinese silk blouses, and the men wore rubber boots even in summer, "without any necessity, purely out of perverted ideas."

Rogues? No, they were only not sentimental. There goes a tired wanderer on his way through the dust and heat of the steppe. A peasant catches him up in his cart. "Hey, brother, jump up, I'll give you a lift." After a few versts the refreshed wanderer makes to get off.

"Well, many thanks, I must turn aside here."

"And what about my money?" asks the kind little peasant. "I took pity on you and gave you a lift—it wasn't done just for love, old man!"

When these peasants were required to do statute-labour for prospectors they managed to enrich themselves—though not with the aid of their spade. The exiles hired for the labour frequently ran away from the mines before their contract expired. The fearless Siberian peasants were then installed as overseers. The manager of a gold-mine had engaged as ostler a Siberian giant, a red-haired youth named Vassily. This young man could carry off a full-grown felled pine on his back without assistance; with his fist he could knock down an untamed horse; he wrestled for fun with young bears; he played a balalaika of his own making—and he taught riding to the manager's daughter. During the whole of his service there was only one escape—the manager's daughter ran away, with Vassily himself. They were wedded in the town and then came back to see Papa. He cursed, spat, threatened violence—but a glance at the shoulders of his unpolished son-in-law led him to change his mind.

"Very well," he said. "I had more or less set aside twenty thousand roubles as her dowry. You shall have it—and then get out of my sight!"

The young couple took the twenty thousand and drove off.

And where did Vassily decide to go? To Zürich. Why Zürich, of all places? We do not know. Two years later he returned with wife and child. And another two years later Papa settled in Irkutsk, where he lived in comfort, with nothing to do and nothing to worry about. The ostler Vassily was now manager of the gold-mine.

Gentle manners and refinement were not to be expected from these Siberian children of nature. They ate and drank on such a scale that even the Russians, who are no weaklings in this respect, were amazed—to say nothing of foreigners. Gmelin thought at first that in Siberia it must be required by law of every inhabitant without exception that on feast-days he should become dead-drunk.

Merchants came from all Siberia to the fur fair at Irbit. They concluded their deals and then made for a tavern. The merchant would give the innkeeper's wife a little heap of money, tied up in a red handkerchief, to take care of. In addition to this he would give her a sum he meant to drink away. "When this money is gone, make me sober!"

After two, three, or more days, according to the sum of money available, his carousal was brought to an end. He would demand his red handkerchief, but he might shout and rage as he liked—he would not get it yet. He was put into a room and locked in—and left to sleep off his drink. Then he was doused with cold water, given his bundle, and allowed to go home.

Once a new arrival in Siberia, after a carousal of this sort at Irbit, complained to the police that he had been robbed: he declared that when his handkerchief was returned to him there was a substantial sum short. The whole of the respectable merchants of the place filed past the examining judge. And one after another declared that Maria Ivanovna, the hostess, was the most honest woman in the world, and that in her respectable and honourable house they had enjoyed nothing but the purest pleasure. They collected the sum at issue from among themselves and handed it to the complainant, but advised him not to be seen at Irbit again too soon.

Merchants built the first school in Siberia, and gave the money for the first university. They built theatres and churches, equipped scientific expeditions at their own expense, established with their money the first newspapers in Siberia, and at their own expense sent young people from Siberia to study at Moscow and St Petersburg. In the middle of the nineteenth century they were fully capable of looking after their own interests; they worked hard and drank hard, they made money and were waiting for a man who would realize what Siberia needed and what she had to offer.

## Chapter 32

### "THE USELESS RIVER"

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AT Irkutsk, 1847 passed into 1848 as restlessly as all over Europe. The reason, however, was different. In Europe the wave of national revolutions had come; in eastern Siberia a Governor-General had retired and another was expected in his place.

In the autumn of 1847 it became known in the city that General Muravyev had been appointed Governor-General.

"Which Muravyev? The diplomat, or the ex-Dekabrist?"

"But the Dekabrist was hanged."

"There's another one."

Toward the end of the year the doubt was resolved: it was Nikolai Nikolayevich Muravyev, Lieutenant-General, thirty-eight years old.

"Where did he distinguish himself so much as to get so far at thirty-eight?"

Nobody knew. He had been Governor at Tula for a year. He was known as a "Liberal" and an advocate of peasant emancipation. He had fought against the mountain tribes in the Caucasus, and before that against the Turks, and still earlier against the Polish rebels. He had a maimed arm.

"An aristocrat?"

"Well, nothing special, but still—his father was head of the Tsar's private office: the son came to court when only a cadet."

"Aha, so that's it!"

Muravyev's thirty-eight years also upset the old officials. Prince Gorchakov, Governor of western Siberia, shouted to his young secretary as he came in to report to him:

"Congratulations! You have been appointed a Minister!"

And slapping on the table the file of papers brought in to him, he shouted still louder:

"What a time we're living in! When greenhorns are appointed Governors-General!"

Nicholas I had enjoyed the company of Muravyev during his journey through the "government" (province) of Tula, but nobody had expected Muravyev to be appointed Governor of eastern Siberia. Nicholas, however, had his own way of looking at things. Tall, courteous, cold as a block of marble, the ruler had chatted in a friendly way with the nervous, shock-haired little man. The Governor had talked to the Tsar about the tasks that

would face a Governor-General. Irregularities in the administration. Old and perverted officials. Abuses in the granting of gold-mining claims. Siberia was ruled by Governors, but the Governors were ruled by the merchants.

"I know all that very well," said the Tsar in his level, metallic voice. "But what can we do? Where are we to get our men from? You can see at a glance—they're all either fools or knaves!"

There was an important question—the trade with China. It was going very badly. Still more important was the question of the Russian possessions in the Pacific. How to feed them? How to defend them? "The Amur, too, must be considered—but that is for the future."

Muravyev turned over to his deputy and went to St Petersburg. There he made himself acquainted with his future duties and with the views of the Government. He talked to Ministers and was received once more by the Tsar. The Ministers talked about various matters; but all without exception ended with the statement that the Amur was a river with which it would serve no purpose to interfere, since to do so would only upset the friendship with the Chinese and could bring nothing but trouble. Nicholas, too, referred to it once more as they parted: "The Amur is a useless river. It does not offer us an outlet to the ocean. At its mouth the navigable water is three feet deep—what good to us is a river like that?"

The one man in St Petersburg who held a different opinion was Lieutenant-Commander Nevelskoy—one more of those officers of the Russian Naval Staff who through two centuries had been inscribing their names at every twist and turn of the endless coastline from the White Sea to Korea. He had been commissioned to escort a convoy from Kronstadt to Petropavlovsk in Kamchatka, in command of the little transport ship *Baikal*. To confine himself to this task seemed to the Commander to be beneath his dignity. Transport a cargo? Was it for this that he had studied the history of naval warfare and worked through the writings of La Pérouse, Broughton, and Krusenstern? Strange thing—all of them regarded Sakhalin as a peninsula, though none of them had ever seen the isthmus that joined it to the continent. All of them considered that the Amur did not enter the sea, simply because nobody had seen its estuary. They might just as well assume that the Amur did not exist at all, because none of them had ever seen the river itself! A river two thousand miles long, watering a basin three-quarters of a million square miles in extent—was it likely that it lost itself somewhere in sands or marshes just before reaching the seashore? No, Commander Nevelskoy was not ready to believe that.

He suggested to his superiors that after delivering his cargo he

should proceed from Kamchatka to Sakhalin and go in search of the estuary of the Amur. He was categorically forbidden to do so. The authorities knew that the Amur had no estuary, since two years earlier they had themselves entrusted the Russo-American Company with the clearing up of this question, and the company had sent out a ship in the deepest secrecy: the sailors on board her had even smoked not Russian but Virginian tobacco, so that the Chinese should take them for Americans!

The tobacco had all been smoked, but the captain had seen nothing either of Chinese or of the Amur estuary.

Nevelskoy determined to go on his explorations in spite of the prohibition. He told Muravyev of his plan. The two sat long over the map. "If you are right," said Muravyev finally, "then I could go straight to Kamchatka by ship. Kamchatka is part of my government, though His Majesty does not expect me to go there."

"Even if the Amur estuary is navigable, Your Excellency could not pass through—so long as we have not the right of passage by ship."

"Yes—yes, that's the point. At St Petersburg it seems a small matter. But I—I consider it as of the first importance."

Muravyev proved a keen governor. He was interested in the Amur as a means of transit through "his" government. He promised Nevelskoy that in the event of any trouble he would shield him in reporting to the Tsar.

On the morning after Muravyev's arrival at Irkutsk all the higher officials assembled at the Governor's palace for his reception. The door opened and there shot into the hall a little man in a general's uniform, with a slightly bloated, youthful face, long reddish locks, and rose-red cheeks. His maimed arm was in a sling. He walked past the officials, hearing the name and rank of each and passing on to the next, without shaking hands. He only stopped in one case; he had heard the notorious name "Mangaseyev"; its owner had gained evil repute through his venality. Muravyev's bright eyes looked out sharply at the man from beneath his slightly swollen lids as he promptly said: "I hope you are not thinking of serving with me." He saluted, turned round, and left the hall.

"And he calls himself a Liberal!" said Mangaseyev, astonished.

But the new Governor was a very real Liberal. He soon proved it. There were living then at Irkutsk the Dekabrists' wives Maria Volkonsky and Katharina Trubetskoy. Outside the city lived their husbands and a few remaining "amis du quatorze." Those "criminals" were admitted into society in the city, but with a certain reserve, and the administrative officials avoided all intercourse with them.

Muravyev called on the "criminals'" wives and took the opportunity to tell them that their husbands might move into Irkutsk. He said he had a high regard for them, and recalled that the Muravyev family had sent seven of its members into the secret society!

Soon he met the Dekabrists themselves. He received them personally, and fed with the able and caustic old Savalishin, who sketched the problems of eastern Siberia to him with exceptional clarity and told him, full of wrathful sarcasm, of the rejection at St Petersburg, long ago, of his Californian plan.

After these meetings Muravyev proceeded to Transbaikalia, to gain acquaintance with the region. In one village the headman had collected "voluntary" contributions for a present for the new Governor. When he offered the present—some silver vessel—Muravyev fell into a rage and, on Liberal principles, ordered that the unfortunate villager should be given three hundred strokes with rods.

A month after his return to Irkutsk he received a mail from St Petersburg. The Ministry informed him that he had been denounced for his relations with the December criminals.

Muravyev wrote his reply that same day. He wrote that the purpose of punishment was reformation of the criminal; this purpose had been attained in the case of the Dekabrists. They were now the most loyal of subjects of His Majesty.

A month after this, Muravyev received from St Petersburg the original of the denunciation. It had been sent by the Civil Governor of Irkutsk. On the margin of Muravyev's explanations the Tsar had written with his own hand: "Thank you."

"Here at last," Tsar Nicholas had said, "is a man who understands me! I had to punish the Dekabrists, but I had no desire to deal savagely with them."

The indiscreet informer fled from his post. Muravyev's fame shone like a pillar of fire before the amazed exiles of eastern Siberia. A new era had dawned for them. The Governor-General chose as his aide-de-camp the Dekabrist Volkonsky's son, who had been born in Siberia. To other posts he appointed talented young men whom he had brought with him from St Petersburg. Together with them he began at once to study the problems of eastern Siberia. At the very outset he realized that the subject which at St Petersburg had received only casual mention was here the most important of all, indeed, the one thing that mattered—"the Amur—a Russian river!"

\* \* \*

Since the days of Poyarkov and Khabarov the question of the Amur had never been out of men's thoughts in Siberia. It was

only St Petersburg that had lost interest in it. Russia's thoughts were of the Black Sea. She sought an outlet to the world market through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.

This did not stop her movement eastward; during the Napoleonic wars Baranov had hoisted the Russian flag in California. But he had done so on his own initiative. Alaska was incorporated in Russia only because the Russian Government had found no serious opposition offered in any quarter. California was abandoned at the first sign of opposition.

It was necessary to deal cautiously with the Amur. Once already the river had been seized and had had to be given up. There would have to be a fight for it. And it was not worth a fight if it gave no access to the sea. For a century and a half Russia had left the treaty of Nerchinsk uncontested. What political results can ensue from inadequate knowledge of geography!

In Siberia, however, the matter was viewed differently. There, many men had seen the Amur with their own eyes, and anyone who had seen it felt as Nevelskoy did—that that gigantic stream could not lose itself somewhere in the neighbourhood of the ocean, as a petition from Siberia might "get lost" in the Ministries at St Petersburg.

In Kamchatka, too, the Amur was in men's minds. Bering's expedition had shown how intolerably toilsome was the journey there from Siberia. Soon after Bering's death an unknown writer submitted to the Russian Government a memorandum on the necessity of annexing the Amur.

Ten years later, Governor Myatlev proposed that negotiations should be entered into with the Chinese for the free passage of shipping along the Amur.

His successor, Ssoimanov, personally explored the course of the Shilka and the upper Amur. He was himself a navigator and geographer. He had produced the first charts of the White Sea and the Caspian. As a member of the Board of Admiralty he had taken part in the preparations for Bering's great expedition. For alleged participation in a conspiracy he had been punished by the slitting of his nostrils and by banishment to Siberia. When the usual reaction took place in St Petersburg he was appointed Governor of eastern Siberia. Ninety years before Muravyev and Nevelskoy he had already come to the conclusion that Siberia's only possible outlet to the sea was along the Amur.

He had been very popular in Siberia. Tradition says that a skilful surgeon had healed his nose by grafting a piece of skin from his arm.

In the middle of the eighteenth century the caravan trade with China via Kyakhta ceased entirely for a time. Yakobi, the commandant of the fortress of Selenginsk, made a proposal that



a flotilla should be "secretly" built on the Shilka, and the Amur then seized! He did not believe that the Amur "got lost," any more than did his son, the Governor, or his son's friend Grigori Shelekhov, who himself offered to sail down the Amur to the sea.

The idea lived on. In 1801 General Strandmann, commanding the troops in Siberia, submitted to Alexander I a memorandum in which he proposed to enter into negotiations with the Chinese concerning Amur shipping. "If they do not agree," said the bold general, "then use force."

The memorandum made an impression. Four years later Count Golovkin was sent to China for trade negotiations. Golovkin was also to broach the question of Russian shipping on the Amur. The mission had no success. Golovkin had proceeded no farther than Urga when he came into conflict with the Chinese, and they refused to let him travel beyond that city.

Among Golovkin's company was the German sinologist Klapproth, "our little Klapproth, a Chinese incarnate," as Goethe called him. Later Golovkin reported personally to the *Herr Geheimderat* on his journey: on July 27, 1812, the Olympian mentioned in his diary "the count's intelligent discourse."

The "intelligent" Golovkin returned from Urga with nothing achieved, and in a thoroughly bellicose state of mind. Another of his companions on the journey, named Wiegel, wrote under his influence:

"Why not build a new port on the Amur estuary, where there are so many suitable sites? It would take the place of the ill-starred ports of Petropavlovsk and Okhotsk. This would be a hundred times more useful than our stupid American possessions. . . . At Irkutsk and Nerchinsk and in Transbaikalia there was not a soul who did not talk of Dauria as a Paradise lost."

Of all the Siberian Governors, General Pestel alone seems to have had no interest in the Amur. His son, the Dekabrist, was keenly interested in it. In his plan for a rebuilding of Russia he demanded the incorporation of "part of Mongolia," so that Russia should acquire "the whole course of the Amur, and the Russian fleet should be able to reach the eastern ocean."

Three years after the younger Pestel had died on the gallows and his December associates had started work as convicts in the mines of Siberia, an escaped convict, Guri Vassilyev, an "Old Believer," repeated Poyarkov's journey and once more attracted Siberian interest to the Amur.

Vassilyev had been sentenced to the katorga in 1808. Seven years later he had fled to the Amur with two comrades, and he resolved to set up a hermitage there for the salvation of souls.

At that time the Chinese and Manchus were occupied in the hunting of escaped convicts. For every escaped man delivered

to it the Russian Government paid a special reward. Consequently, Vassilyev was unable to remain free for long in the taiga. After a year he and his comrades were captured by Manchus and taken to the Russian frontier.

Two years later Vassilyev fled again to the Amur, and a year after that he was again captured and delivered up—this time at Nerchinsk. There he received his due portion of the knout; and three years later he escaped yet again. In a little boat of his own making he descended the Amur, but again he fell into the hands of Manchus, who took him to the Chinese at Aigun.

Three years later he fled from there. Once more he made himself a boat, in which he reached the Amur estuary and sailed on into the Sea of Okhotsk. He went northwards along the coast, landed, joined a group of Tungus hunters, and hunted and made friends with them—but in the spring they delivered him in triumph to the katorga and received their three roubles.

That was in 1818—a proud year for him, his twentieth in Siberia. Twenty years of knout and escape, and of life in the wild, and of solitary prayers to the Old God!

Vassilyev's adventures were so extraordinary and his reports of them so sensible that after a talk with him Lavinsky, then Governor-General of eastern Siberia, submitted to St Petersburg a plan for the union of the Amur territory with Russia.

All these things were told to Muravyev in Siberia. The importance of the Amur was represented to him. In the interest of "his" government he had already given Nevelskoy his blessing at St Petersburg. Now, however, he realized that the Amur estuary was a necessity for all Siberia. Six years before his arrival at Irkutsk an event had happened in the world of which the Siberians quickly took account. Opium had gone from India to China, and tea had sailed from China to Europe! If Shanghai monopolized the tea trade, Kyakhta would lose all reason for existence. They would then have to find a water route to China or renounce trade with China for all time.

This was realized even in St Petersburg. And this was the reason for the secret expedition to the Amur estuary, which had finally demonstrated that the Amur was a useless river.

The shock-haired little man felt that History herself had sent him to do her work. He recalled how his comrades in the Caucasus had continually chaffed him on his ambition. Those comrades! Where were they now with their chaffing? Vegetating in staff posts or in office jobs of some sort? Living in idleness on their estates? Scintillating in salons? He had neither the property nor the talent for scintillating. He was a little man with unruly hair and rosy cheeks. With cheeks like that a man must either achieve greatness or sink into the night of oblivion.

The Autocrat had said to him in St Petersburg: "You will be unlikely to get to Kamchatka; it is an extraordinarily tiresome journey."

Tiresome? He would face it. He would sail down the Lena to Yakutsk; from there it was seven hundred miles on horseback across the tundra, through bogs and over mountains, to Okhotsk. Then by sea to Petropavlovsk. It would take three months to get there, and another three to return—for the sake of a fortnight at Petropavlovsk. For the first time in two hundred and fifty years a Siberian Governor would see Kamchatka with his own eyes.

Such a Governor had not before been seen in Siberia. Muravyev returned to the style of Shelekhov and Pronchishchev. He took his young wife with him to Kamchatka. On the sea he himself took command of the ship. He recalled that the blood of navigators flowed in his veins: the Lieutenant Muravyev who in Bering's time tried to sail from the northern Dvina to the Ob was an ancestor of his. His father, before entering the Tsar's private secretariat, had sailed with Krusenstern and Lissiansky in English ships under Nelson. His mother was the daughter of a Navy Minister!

Where was Nevelskoy? That was the question. From Kamchatka Muravyev went overland to Okhotsk, and from there by sea to Sakhalin, in search of Nevelskoy. He passed between the north point of Sakhalin and the mainland—imagining this to be the Gulf of Tartary, as Krusenstern and La Pérouse and after them Tsar Nicholas had supposed. He did not find Nevelskoy, and, convinced that he had perished, returned to Ayan Bay.

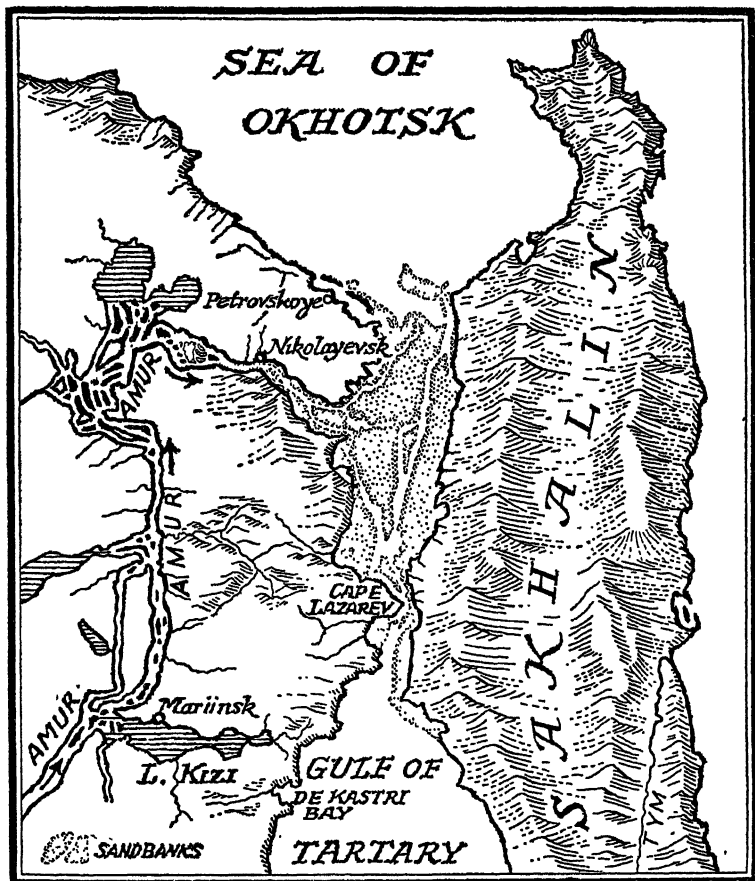
Meanwhile Nevelskoy had sailed through the Straits of Tartary, and his *Baikal* lay in the estuary of the Amur; but it was impossible for Muravyev to know this. Nevelskoy sailed into the Amur estuary on board a sloop; for three weeks he sailed to and fro between its countless sandbanks, mapping the estuary, and then he sailed northward along the coast and himself reached Ayan Bay.

At the outset of the nineteenth century a Japanese, Mamia Rinso, had been in the Amur estuary; he had established that Sakhalin is an island, and had even mapped the whole region. But Rinso regarded the Amur as unnavigable, and his map was of no use for navigation. This estuary is a whole sea, filled with seven hundred square miles of sandbanks through which invisible channels pass. The narrow part of the Straits of Tartary is also filled with sandbanks. Both this part and the Amur estuary have, however, navigable channels—but they had to be discovered, sounded, and entered accurately on the map. This Nevelskoy did.

The *Baikal* had not yet dropped anchor in Ayan Bay when Muravyev went out to her in a boat. The little general stood up in the boat and urged on the rowers. "Where have you been, where

have you come from?" he shouted to Nevelskoy from a long way off.

"Sakhalin is an island, and ships can enter the Amur both from the north and from the south: I have found that out!" shouted Nevelskoy, highly excited. Then it occurred to him that he was



AMUR ESTUARY AND GULF OF TARTARY

addressing the Governor-General, and he added, in a lower key, "Your Excellency."

The journey to Kamchatka had opened Muravyev's eyes: his "government" embraced the Pacific Ocean from the Amur estuary to Baranov Island! He thought of his last talk with the Tsar. "They can take Kamchatka from you," Nicholas had said, with a glance at the map, "and it will be six months before you hear of it." Yes, "they" could take it—if "we" are not masters of the Amur.

He sent a letter to St Petersburg. He reported on the Amur. He made much of Nevelskoy's services.

Reply came that Nevelskoy was promoted commander. On that, Muravyev ordered him to proceed to St Petersburg. There he was informed that in punishment for his "audacity" and "insubordination" he would be reduced to common sailor. What would happen, he was asked, if every naval officer presumed to test, on his own responsibility, the accuracy of the views of the authorities!

But the navigator was well able to speak up for himself. He declared that he had not only tested the views of the authorities but upset them.

It might have gone ill with him but for the intervention of the Tsar. Commander Nevelskoy returned to Siberia with instructions to set up winter quarters on the shore of the Sea of Okhotsk, not far from the estuary of the Amur, but on no account to enter the estuary.

At the end of July 1850 he was back by the Amur estuary. He "strictly" followed his instructions: north of the estuary he established the winter camp of Petrovskoye. But then he went up the Amur, set up a mast on its left bank, not far from the estuary, and on it, on August 1, 1850, hoisted the Russian flag. At this spot he laid out a second winter camp, which he called Nikolayevsk.

The Government at St Petersburg grew excited. "Muravyev and Nevelskoy are playing a trick for which we shall have to pay," said Count Nesselrode, the Foreign Minister. Prince Gorchakov, who had been so indignant at the "greenhorn's" appointment, went to St Petersburg and met Prince Chernyshev, the War Minister—the notorious executioner of the Dekabrists. "We must renounce the Amur," he said, "even if the Chinese were to beg us to take it. The Amur opens a route for others into Siberia. What sort of people, what sort of ideas, would stream into Siberia? It is not the navies of the Americans and the English that are a danger, but their thoughts!"

Chernyshev entirely agreed. He was not too clear about where the Amur was, but he regarded it as entirely probable that the Dekabrists, if a big river appeared anywhere near them, would steal Siberia and export it to America. Those people were capable of anything.

When Muravyev came to St Petersburg he found a solid group formed against him—and against the Amur. He had to listen to not a few sharp words. Chernyshev was furious. "Perhaps you want a statue set up in your memory?" he said poisonously to Muravyev. Clearly he considered that the best servant of the State is one who has no possible title to a statue.

As always, Nicholas himself settled the dispute. Muravyev reported to him that the Russian flag was already floating over the Amur estuary. "Where the Russian flag has once been flown," said Nicholas, "it must not be lowered."

Muravyev hurried back to Irkutsk as if on wings. He sent Nevelskoy once more to the Amur estuary, and himself concentrated on the gold of Siberia. Gold alone could silence his critics at St Petersburg. He set at the head of the Nerchinsk mining district a merciless and untamable official, Rasgildeyev, with instructions to increase the gold extraction at all costs.

Rasgildeyev set to work. He sent a further 4,500 exiles to the State mines, forced them to work day and night, and in three years had doubled the output. In 1853, basing its estimate on this increase, the Government anticipated a yield of 115 poods of gold; Muravyev sent it 171½!

After the receipt of that gold transport the Minister of Finance, who had always supported Prince Chernyshev in Siberian questions, went over strongly to Muravyev's side. But how Rasgildeyev fed his exile slaves, how he "nursed" them during the typhus epidemics, in what hovels he housed them, and into what mass graves he shovelled them—all this was asked neither by the Minister of Finance nor by the Governor-General.

Muravyev's ideas on the Amur had ripened. He saw what was needed—troops; but he had none. He could not call for them; even without that, the authorities at St Petersburg were near the end of their patience with his ideas. He formed the peasants of Transbaikalia into a Cossack army. He began giving them military drill, he formed them into companies and regiments, he associated them with the frontier detachments, and he added to them a few detachments of Buryats and Tunguses. At the end of two years he had a real army!

In the old works at Petrovsk he began building machinery for the future Amur steamers. He transferred engineers and foremen from the Urals. He had no money for this—the trading community placed it at his disposal.

Meanwhile Nevelskoy had slipped once more into the Amur estuary. He had placed his men and part of his provisions on board the *Baikal*; he himself and his staff and his young wife, who had come straight from a St Petersburg academy, went on board the old launch *Shelekhov*. The vessel did not do justice to her name: she stuck fast in a sandbank, a thing that would never have happened to Grigori Shelekhov. The boats were put out and the women and children put first into them. When Katharina Nevelskoy was asked to get in, the young lady from the St Petersburg academy said:

"The captain is the last man to leave the ship—and after him goes his wife!"

A few moments after the Nevelskoy's had left the *Shelekhov* she disappeared beneath the waves.

Nevelskoy made with his company for Petrovskoye. He sent out his colleagues to explore the course of the Amur and the districts surrounding it. Lieutenant Boshnyak went all over Sakhalin, discovered deposits of pit coal, and received from the natives a few gilded leaves from a psalter on which was written: "We, Ivan, Danilo, Pyotr, Sergei, and Vassily, were disembarked on August 17, 1805, at Tamari-Aniva, by Lieutenant Khvostov..."

This was the last trace of the expedition which Chamberlain Rezanov had sent to "punish" the Japanese.

A year later Muravyev was back in St Petersburg. Once more he pored over the map with the Tsar. He showed him the region over which the shadow of the flag raised by Nevelskoy fell: it was the region between the river Buya and the sea. The Tsar asked how this tallied with the treaty of Nerchinsk.

"When the treaty was signed," replied Muravyev, "neither we nor the Chinese had any conception of these regions; the frontier question remained open. That was confirmed in the treaty of Kyakhta. This region belongs to nobody. The natives pay tribute to nobody. We have been going about there for three years now, and have never yet set eyes on a single Chinese."

The Tsar got up, walked to and fro in the room, and then stopped in front of a big hanging map and beckoned to Muravyev to come over to it. He laid his hand over Sakhalin and the Amur estuary. "That is all very well, but to protect this territory I should have to send troops and cannon from here"—and he traced a great arc across the world until his white finger stopped at Kronstadt.

"That is not necessary, Your Majesty," objected Muravyev. His hand followed the Amur downstream from Lake Baikal. "Reinforcements can be sent from here."

Nicholas looked down from aloft on the red-haired head that faced the map. Not a trace of baldness yet, he thought, not a sign yet even of going thin. Well, he is thirteen years younger than I. Smilingly he placed a hand on the obstinate mane—

"Get away, Muravyev, you are going out of your senses once more over the Amur!"

Next day he sent the hare-brained general the Order of the White Eagle.

From St Petersburg, Muravyev went abroad on leave. His rank called for a cure at Marienbad; his age—he was now forty-four—demanded a further course of treatment at Paris. Then he made a tour of Europe. He watched bullfights; he wandered

through the British Museum, admired the Loreley rock, fed at the Bristol in Berlin, and thought about the necessity of defending Kamchatka. "England is hostile to us, she is only waiting for the spring in order to attack us, and is staving us off at present with negotiations"—so he wrote to a colleague at Irkutsk.

On his way home to St Petersburg he learned that Turkey had declared war on Russia. He represented once more to the Tsar what that meant for Siberia. War with Britain was inevitable. The British navy would appear off Kamchatka and in the Amur estuary. The exit from the Siberian cellar would be nailed up for all time. Troops must be sent down the Amur.

The Tsar gave his approval on condition that "it does not stink of powder." But the powerful and able Metropolitan Filaret gave his blessing unreservedly to Muravyev and his new enterprise.



## Chapter 33

### THE LAND OF THE NEW

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A MASS of business had accumulated at Irkutsk. St Petersburg had informed the Chinese Government of the impending cruise, and it was now time to push on with it. Muravyev was, of course, going himself—two thousand miles along an unknown river, with a detachment of seven hundred men and in addition the freight, arms and artillery, horses, cattle, grain, forage!

Day and night the axes rang, miles of the Shilka's banks were covered with the hulls of barges; camel and horse caravans were bringing stores and weapons, herds of cattle were being driven in. Only at night could Muravyev find time for his correspondence with the Chinese frontier authorities, the St Petersburg Ministries, and Nevelskoy. He was turning all Siberia, Kamchatka, and the Russo-American Company to the service of his plans.

There was wild excitement in Siberia. The new, matter-of-fact, wealthy, acquisitive Siberia! The gold prospectors, the merchants and monopoly owners, the tea millionaires, the fur adventurers, the river pirates, the salt-water and fresh-water Vikings! Their ancestors had equipped troops with their own money and had themselves led them into battle. They, the merchants and the Cossacks, had passed through the fiery wall of the Great Shaman, they had seized the Siberian snail by its horns, they had tied America's tufted tail to Russia. Once already they had sat on the back of the Black Dragon—it was not they but the Tsar's voyevods who had let it go again! Now they had found their man, a new Khabarov in general's uniform. All those voyevods and Governors, Gagarin and Cherkatsky and all the rest, had filled their own pockets chock-full, trading in everything, from their own consciences to other people's lives—but they had been alien elements to the Siberian traders. This Governor, however, himself anything but a trader, was their man, for he was trying to open a way for them out of Siberia into the world; he had started to open China and the Pacific to them!

Yes, they were on his side. They forgave him for his roughness with them and his occasional gesticulations with his arms, forgetting that one was maimed. At all events, he did not take shelter behind other people. Once the peasants in a village not far from Irkutsk rioted and chased away the police authorities; Muravyev came on the scene alone save for a single aide-de-camp; he rode into the midst of the armed and furious crowd, forced

them to disperse, and restored order without shedding blood or locking up anybody.

And he knew how the Siberians felt. When he got back to Irkutsk from St Petersburg his first public act was to attend a banquet that had been arranged in his honour by the trading community. He had not forgotten that the first Siberian steamer, which was to carry his troops down the Amur, had been built with a hundred thousand roubles which had been given by the merchant Kuznetsov. He had not forgotten that the merchants, considering his palace not imposing enough for the Governor, had provided the money for building a new one. He knew that he could have just as much money from the merchants as he cared to ask for.

That was a banquet! Special couriers had ridden day and night across snow-clad Siberia bringing French champagne and artist chefs from Moscow for this one meal.

For three centuries the Siberian traders had got along perfectly well without poetry. Now, however, that was all changed. An old gentleman in a frock-coat smoothed his silvery beard and struck his glass with a knife. The muse—perhaps in the guise of an exiled student—had hastened to his aid in order to lend expression to his ideas—ideas as sturdy and pleasing as a Siberian cedar:

In the east there shines the reddening dawn,  
Siberia looks out at it full of hope,  
Confident that for our resources  
You are opening outlets and avenues.

Muravyev drank little—he was intoxicated without the champagne. He had not yet conquered the Amur, but Siberia was already his. She lay at his feet, wild beyond words with enthusiasm, her millions jubilant. He saw the country's frontiers expanding under pressure from within. He heard the country's roar as it set its teeth in the back of the Black Dragon.

When the glasses had been drained and the excitement was abating, another old merchant got up. "The Amur," he said, "is a mighty stream, but for a hundred and fifty years we have known nothing about it. For exploration—for geography—I am giving half a pood of gold!"

He might have said so many thousand roubles. But he was carried away. Simple statements like that would no longer serve. He must lift up a lump of gold, eighteen pounds' weight, and "lay it upon the altar."

And again Siberia roared her cheers. The cheers continued in the Irkutsk Club long after Muravyev had driven away, and they continued to echo next morning in all the public resorts in Irkutsk.

Soon they were echoing all over Transbaikalia. They were

especially strident at Chita, where the centre for the equipment of the Amur expedition was. There purchases were made and accounts settled. There the fountains of life flashed, and thither came Maria Ivanovna and her like from far Irbit, to provide the means of expression of the universal joy.

But far away in the west the clouds were gathering. In March 1854 the storm broke: Britain and France had united with Turkey, and the Crimean War had begun. Meanwhile Muravyev had completed his preparations. The Chinese had not replied, but that did not matter to him. He knew that they had other things to think about than the Amur. The Taiping rebellion had broken out, a peasant rising, part social in origin, part patriotic; it had spread half across China. Bogdo Khan, Son of Heaven, had no troops in the north.

In May all was ready. The final religious services were held, with feasting and music, illuminations and the firing of salutes. The last toast had been drunk to Nikolai Nikolayevich Muravyev, "the executor of the plan of Peter the Great." Dozens of fiery serpents shot out through the night sky across the dark Shilka. Muravyev had only decided to fire them off after learning that Chinese "spies" had assembled in full strength on the other bank.

On May 14, 1854, the last mass was intoned. The brave and tender strains of the universal prayer floated over the broad river. "And God shall arise and His enemies shall be destroyed." Officers, soldiers, Cossacks, workers knelt down. Muravyev crossed himself, in passionate zeal, before all the congregation. Quiet and serious, with the Child firmly held in her arms, the Mother of God looked down on the people from her silver frame. Not for the first time had she looked down on such prayers. She recalled the prayers of Chernigovsky, Stepanov, and Tolbuzin in the old Albazin. For a hundred and fifty years since then she had heard the prayers for peace in the cathedral of Nerchinsk. Now they wanted to take her back to Albazin. Why? Must it be?

She was not asked. Men set themselves their own objectives, and then they pray for help.

Apart from the little steamer of 60 h.p. in which Muravyev led his caravan, his expedition differed little from the old-time journeys down the Amur. Crews, cattle, and stores were carried on ninety shallow barges and rafts, such as Khabarov had used. The caravan extended for more than a mile. Between the barges, orderlies sailed to and fro in small boats. Muravyev kept at the head.

They passed first down the Shilka. Four days later their flags were flying over the waters of the Amur. Two days after that a rest was taken by the ruins of Albazin. Muravyev was the first to land.

A week later they passed the mouth of the Zeya. Farther down, on the other bank, was the Chinese town of Aigun, the administrative and military centre of the Chinese Amur territory. Chinese officials approached in boats. They tried to persuade Muravyev to turn back; they had no authority to permit Russian troops to pass.

Muravyev pointed in reply to his flotilla. "Tell your Governor," he said to the interpreter, "that I am here with four thousand men." The Chinese asked the General to pass on as quickly as he could.

About two hundred miles from its estuary the Amur comes close to the Straits of Tartary. At this spot it is easy to reach De Kastri Bay overland. La Pérouse had discovered this bay, and had named it after a French Minister of Marine. Close to this point Nevelskoy had founded the fortress of Mariinsk. That was the final station.

Nevelskoy reported to the Governor-General: In De Kastri Bay, he said, lay the Russian "fleet"—two small warships and two freightships. A few more ships, under the command of Admiral Putyatin, were concealed farther south, in Imperator Bay. British and French squadrons had already been sighted in the Sea of Japan. Was there anything to be gained by sailing on to Kamchatka?

For Muravyev there was no question about it. Without delay he landed three hundred and fifty men, sent them with artillery to the bay, and there had them embarked for Petropavlovsk. He left a hundred Cossacks at Mariinsk; the rest sailed on to Nikolayevsk.

He himself set about organizing defence. He went on foot to the bay, sailed thence in a schooner to Imperator Bay, and discussed with Putyatin the transfer of the fleet to the Amur estuary. Then he sailed on to Petrovskoye. On the way he established a strong battery at the narrowest point of the Straits of Tartary, Cape Lazarev; from Petrovskoye he went by reindeer conveyance to Nikolayevsk. He built a road between De Kastri Bay and Mariinsk, established batteries, laid out ports, built fences, made maps, investigated the coal resources of Sakhalin, searched for amber, and, to give an example to the others, bravely ate "cheremsha," a sort of wild garlic which the natives eat to prevent scurvy, and which in cooking gives off an odour in comparison with which that of ordinary garlic is as mild as violets.

Then he sailed in a small boat to Ayan. There he met a writer who had come with Admiral Putyatin to the Far East in the frigate *Pallada*. The writer was Goncharov, the famous author of the immortal "Oblomov," that incarnation of Russian indolence, passivity, and all that Pushkin describes in the Russians as "lack

of curiosity." Goncharov observed Muravyev with astonishment: he was the living refutation of his "Oblomov." Goncharov was entirely carried away by him—"and who would not be?" he wrote. "What energy! What breadth of outlook, what rapidity of decision, what inextinguishable fire, what will power! . . . No tired glance, no sluggish movement. He has mastered Nature, given life to her, developed her, populated her. . . . The one thing he could not endure was official obstruction; that made him grind his teeth and turned him into a roaring lion."

While Muravyev was hustling at Ayan, the vessels he had sent reached Petropavlovsk. They slipped past the Anglo-French squadron, almost under its nose. Before they had allocated the soldiers to their barracks and properly established their batteries, the enemy ships appeared off the roadstead. There were seven, with two hundred and thirty-six cannon. Petropavlovsk lay before them, defenceless.

The enemy looked through their telescopes: where was the white flag? They did not know that Muravyev had already made some progress there.

After the first bombardment the allies discovered to their surprise that they were being answered from the shore, and then they even saw cannon-balls falling on their ships. The sea-dogs made a face, redoubled the bombardment, and fixed August 30 for the landing and storming. But Fate was manifestly kind to Muravyev. An event unprecedented in naval history happened: on the morning before the battle the English Admiral Price, the senior officer of the combined squadron, blew out his brains.

He left not a word of explanation. What secret did the old admiral take with him to the grave, after forty years of navigation of all the seven seas, and after looking death in the face a hundred times—to fail suddenly, at the end of it all, in front of Muravyev's batteries?

His death gave the defenders of Petropavlovsk a few more days in which to strengthen their batteries. It was unlikely to have raised the spirits of the attackers. For three days they bombarded the Russian fortifications, and then, on September 4, they sent out a landing-party of some seven hundred men. The coastal batteries had already been shot to pieces, but Muravyev had sent field-guns and grape-shot to greet the landing-party. His Amur Cossacks drove the enemy into the sea at the point of the bayonet; there the enemy re-embarked under the shelter of their guns, taking with them all their wounded and some of their dead. They left on the battlefield thirty-four men and four officers killed; four men were taken prisoner. With them an English flag was captured. The Amur detachment had lost thirty-one dead and

sixty-five wounded. Two days later the squadron set sail and went out to sea.

The news of these events reached Muravyev at Irkutsk, where he had already returned and was busy preparing a second transfer of troops for the coming year. At once he sent a report to St Petersburg in which he intimated his decision to concentrate all the forces of the Far East in the new fortress of Nikolayevsk, at the mouth of the Amur. He concluded with a reference to the "wise suggestions of His Majesty," thanks to which it had been possible to defeat the enemy at Kamchatka, and with a request that decorations might be awarded to the executors of those suggestions, his colleagues and subordinates. In the whole report the little word "I" made no appearance.

After he had sealed the official mail, he sat down to write to his brother. "My dear Valerian," ran the hasty, angular, diminutive writing, "Russia has to thank me for still possessing Kamchatka."

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Throughout the winter and into the spring he was busy with the preparations for the second expedition. It was on a much bigger scale than the first. He now built the fortress of Nikolayevsk. Guns for the fortress had to be brought to the Amur estuary. They came from the Urals, two thousand five hundred miles along Siberian roads! Each cannon was drawn by sixty horses. In Transbaikalia oxen were harnessed to them. On the way down the mountains they were held back by ropes held by several dozen men. After each descent the first ox, who had borne the main burden, was a physical wreck. The Buryat drivers ate it there and then. When the first guns were shipped—they weighed three tons apiece—they broke through the bottom of the vessels, which sank. Muravyev sent forty of these guns, together with munitions and thirty tons of powder for his fortress. In all, he had this time to send six thousand five hundred tons of freight. To this end he built a hundred and thirty barges and two new steamers.

On March 2, 1855, Nicholas I died. The cold, proud giant who had turned Russia into ice and whose icy glance had long fascinated Europe, realized that the Russian flag over Sebastopol must be hauled down. He did not poison himself, as the story went: sickness spared him that sin.

Squeezed into his uniform of the Guards, clean-shaven, with twisted moustache and painted cheeks, he lay in the white hall of the Winter Palace and received the last homage from his subjects. But the little hare-brained general, accompanied by a Cossack, was rushing along mountain paths half washed away by the spring, by Lake Baikal. He rushed to the Shilka, inspected his works,

scolded the slack, kissed the keen, raced to and fro, shouted, laughed, stamped, gnashed his teeth—he was alive!

When he heard of the Tsar's death, he realized what that meant. He had lost his mainstay at St Petersburg. Russia had lost all hope of winning the Crimean War. Now he must hurry.

At the beginning of May, Muravyev divided his expedition into three sections, and himself embarked with the first. His wife went with him. He did not want to take her, but she insisted. "You let me go alone the first time," objected Muravyev. "I did not know," she replied, "that it was so dangerous."

With the other two sections went the first Amur settlers, in all four hundred and eighty-one men, women, and children. "Geography" also went with them, furnished by the half-pood of gold which the old merchant of Irkutsk had laid "on the altar."

Once more unending water caravans passed the Chinese posts. Once more officials rowed up—from Albazin—to induce Muravyev to turn back, but in vain. He hastened on; he was determined to get to the theatre before the show started.

That there was going to be a show he was certain. The only question was how it would end. He gave orders for troops and guns to be transferred from Petropavlovsk to the Amur. Would they get there in time?

The Virgin of Albazin stood by him as before. They were there in time, once more slipping almost under the noses of enemy squadrons.

The Amur estuary was still covered with ice. Muravyev's "naval forces" lay at anchor in De Kastri Bay. On May 8 a big English frigate approached the bay from the south. She was followed by a corvette and a brig. A small Russian ship opened fire across their bows. After a few shots the English withdrew. They were sure there was no northward exit from the Gulf of Tartary. The brig remained behind to cover the withdrawal; the frigate sailed to Hakodate to join the admiral, to fetch reinforcements, and to receive new instructions.

When the English returned a week later, they found no one in De Kastri Bay. The Russians, they supposed, had burnt their ships. But they had not: they had left the bay the day before, making northwards, and lay at anchor in the straits, hidden from the English by Cape Lazarev.

Meanwhile the main British units were waiting in Avacha Bay. When they learned that the transports with troops and stores had slipped away from Petropavlovsk, they set out in pursuit. They entered the Gulf of Tartary from the north, and saw, to their astonishment, that the Russian ships had suddenly disappeared.

They had all disappeared into the Amur estuary, which was at last free from ice. There Muravyev made his arrangements. He

waited impatiently for the British at last to find him and to approach him along the narrow channel between the sandbanks of the Amur and his batteries. But the British did not find him; they turned back and crossed the Sea of Okhotsk.

It was an amusing game of hide-and-seek. But for the troops, the sailors, and the settlers who had been brought there, it was not so amusing. Muravyev's colleagues, too, especially Rear-Admiral Nevelskoy, "Commander-in-Chief of all the naval forces," were not having an easy time.

That did not matter. Muravyev won the game. He passed the whole summer in uninterrupted work; for weeks at a time he never left his sloop; his one thought was—"They will come yet!" When in the autumn "they" entered De Kastri Bay—for they had still failed to find the entrance to the Amur—they were received in the same way as at Kamchatka. They tried to land troops, but had to withdraw under the fire of the guns.

At last Muravyev could feel that he had a "government" under him in Siberia. He chartered a small American schooner that had strayed into those waters, and went in her to Ayan. His wife and his closest colleagues accompanied him. The sea was rough, the tackle was already covered with ice, and fog hid the horizon. This was their salvation, for on the second day of the voyage they ran close past a French vessel. For ten days she chased them, but they got away from her. Muravyev gave evidence once more of his navigator's blood. He did not suffer from seasickness; he overruled the American captain's orders, and taught the sailors how to stiffen sail. When the ship was steadier he went down into the cabin and drafted reports and wrote letters.

Next spring he was in St Petersburg. There he learned that peace had been concluded. There was no need for a third expedition. But it was already under way—a hundred and ten barges and rafts! Muravyev sent orders for the new troops to be quartered at Nikolayevsk and the old ones sent back—and then he went with his wife to Marienbad.

That, however, was his worst mistake. It was far harder for his army to return up the Amur than to sail down. During the winter his troops on the Amur had already been suffering from scurvy. The *cheremsha* was of no avail. The men thought of nothing but getting home. Now they streamed wildly back. Muravyev gave orders that food should be stored for the return journey, he gave orders that whole barge-loads of flour and meat should be sent down the Amur. He gave orders for all this, but he was not there to see to their execution.

The troops had left Nikolayevsk by the middle of summer. They made only slow progress. They towed the barges themselves, they pushed them on with poles—two thousand miles! Autumn



came, then the mud began to freeze, and then the Black Dragon covered itself with scales of ice. The barges stuck fast. The men left them and pushed on on foot. On the journey home no fewer than three hundred men died of typhus.

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Muravyev returned from abroad with new plans. Now the Amur must be made a Russian river.

He went to work. Columns of settlers were transported to the Amur. For the exploitation of the wealth of the new region an Amur Company had already been floated in St Petersburg. There must be prospecting for gold, and trade must be pushed. He reported enthusiastically in 1857 to St Petersburg that in a single season seven foreign steamers had entered the Amur estuary. In the following year he raised the question of building a railway there!

But in addition to all this it was necessary for the situation of the Amur region to be finally "legalized." There would have to be negotiations with the Chinese.

St Petersburg, too, had thought of that. The Amur was no longer regarded as so useless a river. After the Crimean War had ended, the British and French continued their joint activities in Chinese waters. They had opened a door into south China; the Russians must do the same for the north. The Chinese were leaving the Russian Notes unanswered. The Government commissioned Admiral Count Putyatin to negotiate with them.

Putyatin was the aforetime comrade of Savalishin who had thrown cold water on his plan of annexing California. He looked coolly at affairs and did not fall a victim like so many others to dreams of "marvellous good fortune." Instead, after brilliant diplomatic successes in Persia and Japan, he had fashioned his own fortune: he became count, admiral, and Minister of Legation, while his comrade Savalishin dragged out his life as an exiled settler.

The Chinese refused to permit Putyatin to go beyond Kyakhta, just as, years earlier, they had stopped Golovkin at Urga. Putyatin proceeded down the Amur, thence to the Gulf of Chihli, and on to Tientsin. There he began to negotiate with the Chinese.

Muravyev went meanwhile down the Amur. He already had a "fleet" on the river—two gunboats. On its left bank he erected fortresses and founded whole settlements; his barges and steamers moved up and down the river.

When he got back to Irkutsk he could scarcely find the time for all the documents he had to sign and all the reports and letters to be dictated. In addition, he had to have discussions with the geographer whom he had brought with him to Siberia, and with the merchants, and with his political friends.

In 1857 he was visited by a nephew of his wife, a finely cultured and exceptionally gifted man. His name was Bakunin. He came from a landed family, he was fond of oysters and champagne, and he regarded it as his chief task in life to start revolutions in every country in the world.

He was an anarchist, and believed that "the spirit of destruction is at the same time the spirit of creation." He proposed that the "old world" should at once be destroyed, and made an exception only in favour of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. In 1848 he had been at the head of the rising in Dresden; after that he had been arrested by the Prussian police, and had been deported to Russia. He had spent some years in the fortress of Schlüsselburg, and had then been banished to Siberia.

He was very soon one of the family at Muravyev's house. When the day's work was done the Governor-General sat and talked with him in his great study. On the table were candles with little green shades. It was Muravyev's hour of recreation, and he put his feet up in comfort on the big ottoman. Indoors he wore soft Caucasian boots and a simple "litevka," decorated only with the silver epaulettes with the black eagle of a general on the retired list. Above his head hung a Caucasian carpet, and above that a scimitar with a little round hilt in a simple dark sheath with a silver mount. This was a reminder of his young days in the Caucasus, of skirmishes in the mountains and round the council table, of ambitious dreams and of the dark-skinned Greek woman Smaragdi.

Bakunin, a little bloated, inclined to corpulence, and carelessly dressed, enjoyed the fragrance of the Governor's splendid cigars. "The bureaucracy," he said, "must be destroyed."

Muravyev adjusted a cushion and gave an ironical glance at the "nephew."

"You are like that surgeon who said, if your foot hurt, 'it must be amputated,' and if your head ached, 'we had better cut it off.'"

"The bureaucracy is not the head. The head is elsewhere."

"True, but the bureaucracy has the power. It has everything in its hands. How can we get on without the bureaucracy?"

Bakunin pulled down his waistcoat, which in Siberia seemed always to be rucking up. "We can get along quite well without it," he said with conviction. "We must cut ourselves off from it altogether. To the devil with it—Siberia can feed herself."

"Have you gone mad? Cut off Siberia? Do you know I can have you shot at once for such talk?" Muravyev pushed a second cushion behind him and sat up, with his legs crossed like a Turk's. "Feed itself! Who then would want Siberia? What would it be without Russia?"

"Instead of Russia, it should be united with America. Here

we should have the United States of Siberia with Muravyev as President, and there the United States of America—”

“With Bakunin as President?”

They looked at each other and burst out laughing.

“All rubbish,” said Muravyev at last. “While you were thinking about it the Americans would make a beginning by taking Alaska from us. You know how they are building railways? I could not get our blockheads at St Petersburg to see that railways will solve every problem in the future. The Americans are stretching their iron arms across their whole continent—and sooner or later we shall have to give up to them our Russian America. You have heard of the Monroe Doctrine—‘America for the Americans!’”

“Why don’t you build railways in Siberia?”

“Will you give us the money? We should have to borrow it, and they are in horror of that. I tell them the more internal loans the better! But those idiots are afraid they will have nothing to meet the service of the loans. They look on Siberia as a desert, a dustbin. The old chancellery rat, our ‘famous’ Speransky, that ‘man of genius,’ a Governor-General himself, and what a one!—he smelt around here and then declared that in three years he had heard not one word of sense in Siberia! But I tell you, since the death of Tsar Nicholas I have not heard one word of sense in St Petersburg! Here, however, I have heard plenty. I should like to send the merchants here to St Petersburg, to carry on the Ministries! Don’t think I don’t know them—rogues, thieves, bloodsuckers, but—clever! But I would burn the whole bureaucracy of St Petersburg on a pyre, and load their ashes into a gun, and fire them into the Baltic!”

Bakunin had been given a post in the office of a gold-mine owner. He did absolutely nothing, but drew his salary regularly. He shared Muravyev’s good opinion of the Siberian merchants. “That business of the pyre and the cannon—you must have thought it over carefully,” he said approvingly.

“Yes, my son, in sleepless nights I have thought it all over. When I get up in the morning my liver is swollen and I am short of breath. When I feel really ill at night I pray, d’you know, to God in order to get some relief—‘Lord, root them out, that crowd of Philistines!’”

He jumped up from the ottoman, ran to the table, and took a cigar from the box. Bakunin had grown serious. His expression darkened.

“Listen to what I am telling you,” he said impressively, “it is no joke, I mean it seriously. You have begun a tremendous work. You must finish it. Do you know what you have done? You have refined and humanized Siberia! You have transplanted it.

Already it is closer to America and Europe than Russia! You have joined it to the ocean, it is no longer a desert cul-de-sac; Siberia is no longer Siberia. You have carried it to the Pacific, the Mediterranean of the future. Through the Amur, Siberia has at last gained a justification of its existence!"

He had raised his voice as if he was addressing a crowded assembly. Muravyev listened, spellbound.

"What a land you have opened! A grand climate, wonderful soil, many navigable rivers, ocean ports, minerals, commerce! The Slav realm of the Russians lies at last along the shores of the Pacific! Now colonize it! Bring settlers, give them freedom, let them pray to whom they will, to Satan himself if they like—so long as they hold the frontier. Build railways, summon merchants, let capital stream in, Russian or American or any other. Take the Amur away from the Chinese, and don't forget the Ussuri; keep the Sea of Japan in mind! Oh, I have seen Siberia face to face, a blessed region, inexhaustible wealth, immeasurable untapped resources, a great future! Siberia, Siberia, land of the new!"

He leaned back in his armchair, pulled down his waistcoat, and sank into thought. Then Muravyev lit his cigar.

"Devil take you!" he said slowly. "You look like a deacon, and the gendarmes call you an anarchist, but I would make you commander of the garrison of Kyakhta!"

## THE HARVEST

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WHILE Count Putyatin was carrying on endless negotiations with the Chinese Government, Muravyev was preparing a new water caravan and Nevelskoy was strengthening Nikolayevsk. Putyatin wrote that the Chinese were concentrating troops in Manchuria. Muravyev did not altogether believe it, but took precautions in Transbaikalia. At the beginning of 1858 he sent an intimation to Aigun that as soon as the Amur was free from ice he would proceed down it to Nikolayevsk, so that he would be able to discuss all outstanding issues on his way.

In April he crossed the frozen Lake Baikal, and at the beginning of May he started down the Amur. The river was only just open to navigation, and his cutter and two gunboats moved through a thick soup of broken ice and dirty springtime water.

On May 22 his "fleet" dropped anchor by the left bank of the Amur, and he himself, with Perovsky, his diplomatic negotiator, and an interpreter and a small suite, went in a sloop to Aigun. There he was awaited by the "Dzan-dzun," Prince I-Shan, Commander-in-Chief of the Chinese troops and a relative of Bogdo Khan.

Muravyev was received with due honour. In the modest palace of the "Amban" (Governor) negotiations began with a banquet. The meal was like any other, except that the order of the courses was reversed: first there was tea with sweetmeats, then came roast mutton, after that a sucking-pig ragout, and finally, as dessert, the soup. This topsy-turvy meal was taken with rice brandy, which the Chinese, again differing from all international usage, did not cool before drinking but heated.

At dinner Muravyev asked after the health of His Majesty Bogdo Khan, and dwelt at length, at considerable length, on the high opinion the Russian Tsar had formed of the gallantry and wisdom of the powerful prince I-Shan. He invited the prince to visit him in Transbaikalia, and took occasion to mention the endless labour he was involved in at the moment in building forty new warships.

The fat prince listened with a courteous smile, and then spoke of the joy it would be for the Son of Heaven to have beyond the Amur a neighbour like the great commander Muravyev, whose fame filled the whole universe. He would be only too glad to visit him, but he was busy at the moment in providing at Aigun

and Tsitsihar for the new Chinese army, three hundred thousand strong.

Muravyev looked at the beaming face of the Chinese and himself smiled cheerfully. He drank hot rice brandy with him from little silver saucers, and thought of his liver. "What would my doctor at Marienbad say? This yellow devil is probably golloping Ginseng and need not worry in the least. I must ask him about it."

Muravyev had heard of the miracle-working root Ginseng, a precious specific of Chinese medicine, which gave strength to the weak, longevity to the moribund, health to the ailing, and recovery to the plague-stricken. This wonder-root was found in the taiga of the Ussuri region, which in any case he had been urged by Bakunin to annex.

Next day the two met again. Muravyev gave a lucid and clinching exposition of the Russian standpoint: The Amur was the natural frontier between two friendly empires. This fact must absolutely be laid down at once, since Britain was at war with China and her navy might any day take possession of the Amur estuary and the shores around it. In order to prevent the British from being able to do this, Russia must have the support of a treaty with China.

The Chinese negotiators replied that there was a treaty already in existence; it had been concluded at Nerchinsk. As for the British, the great and far-famed Muravyev had already defended Siberia once, and this time the British surely seemed to offer little threat to Siberia?

The Chinese reply was followed by a Russian rejoinder, and this in turn by one from the Chinese.

So it went on, to the accompaniment of countless cups of tea, while four hours struck. The more tea Muravyev drank, the plainer he felt his liver in his right side. When the discomfort had spread to his back, he got up and took from his secretary the draft treaty which had been written out in advance. "We have talked enough today, and are deeply moved by the wisdom of His Magnificence," he said, "but the day that comes is always wiser than the day before, because it is older. I beg the prince to glance at this document and to impart to us tomorrow his reply to it; for today I flatter myself with the hope that I may be permitted to receive His Highness in my quarters."

An hour later His Highness, with suite and bodyguard, came in two junks to Muravyev's flotilla. The suite and bodyguard were entertained on board the junks; all that were invited on board Muravyev's cutter were the Dzan-dzun, the Amban, the captain of the guard, the interpreter, the pipe-bearer, and two sword-bearers. Once more there was ceremonial hospitality.

Here, too, there were tea and sweetmeats, but Russian "national drinks" predominated—vodka, Madeira, port wine, champagne, benedictine, and chartreuse. Once more Muravyev was compelled to sacrifice his liver on the altar of the fatherland.

At the next meeting Muravyev did not appear. The Chinese were informed that the general did not feel well; the negotiations would be carried on by his representative, Councillor of State Perovsky. The Chinese assumed that Muravyev's indisposition was a diplomatic one, but they were only half right; the other half was claimed by the general's liver. So the meetings continued, with tea-drinking, three or four hours a day. Muravyev meanwhile was also drinking tea, but only peppermint tea, and was marking on the map of the Amur the sites of future Russian towns.

On the fourth day he appeared once more at the sitting. He went at a great pace from the river-bank to the house of the Amban, and appeared there in all his magnificence, in the uniform of an A.D.C. to the Tsar, with all the ribbons and orders that he possessed. The Chinese, thrilled, were unable to take their eyes from the sparkling diamond star of the Alexander Nevsky Order.

For the last time he put forward his views. He rejected the appeal to the treaty of Nerchinsk: when that was concluded the Chinese had broken their word; it had been agreed that the plenipotentiaries should appear with only a small suite, but the Chinese had brought a whole army, which the Russians had not done. In violation of the treaty the Chinese Government had demanded tribute from the Uriankhai tribe, which lived within the Russian frontier; the Chinese had looted a Russian trading settlement at Chuguchak, had insulted the Russian flag, and had inflicted damage on the Russians to the amount of 300,000 roubles; and the Chinese Government had just insulted the Russian Tsar once more, in failing to permit his representative, Count Putyatin, to go to Peking. That day or the next the British would sail up the Amur.

For a hundred and fifty years, I-Shan replied through the interpreter, the Russian Tsars had recognized the treaty of Nerchinsk; the persons guilty of plundering at Chuguchak had been subjected to the very best tortures and had been buried alive in the ground—if the general desired, this could also be done to their wives and children; no one had insulted Count Putyatin, the reply from Peking had simply been delayed by the unsettled conditions; if the English should think of showing themselves on the Amur, he, I-Shan himself, would throw the red-haired barbarians into the sea.

The interpreter cast an embarrassed glance at Muravyev's moustache, and suppressed the word "red-haired."

"Why have you not driven the English out of Canton?" asked Muravyev bluntly. "Why have you opened five ports in south China for trade with the British and French, and given no thought to the Russians, who were your friends and who refused to fight against China, although the proposal had been made to them?"

He rose and turned to his interpreter: "Tell them I cannot wait any longer. I have to go to Nikolayevsk. Tell the prince that I remain personally his friend, but the Chinese Government must blame itself for whatever may happen in connexion with the British activities. I will wait till tomorrow. Yes or no."

He cast an angry glance over those present, saluted, and left the room before his words had been translated. He jumped on his horse, galloped to the riverside, and gave the order to set sail. The Amur was showing "white horses"; heavy clouds hung low; gusts of rain swept past. At the last moment I-Shan's secretary hurried up. In the name of the Commander-in-Chief he begged the general not to venture on the river in a small boat.

Muravyev, however, gave no reply. He was very angry, and the foaming Amur and the gusts and the bulging sails just suited his mood. The wind was, in fact, so strong that they reached the opposite shore four miles away from the anchored "fleet." While in the boat Muravyev had noticed that the magnificent diamond star had disappeared from his uniform. His comment was of a force that astonished even his sailors.

On the evening of the same day envoys came from the Dzandzun to ask whether he had safely arrived.

Poor Prince I-Shan, the wise relative of Heaven, realized now what Golovin must have felt when he signed the treaty of Nerchinsk. There were no Jesuits at I-Shan's side. The mandarins could tell Bogdo Khan in Peking that he had a huge fleet on the Amur and an army of two hundred thousand at Tsitsihar. That was all very well, but here a company of Cossacks would suffice for the capture of Aigun. He knew just as well as Muravyev did that the British and French had occupied Canton, and that the blows from the Taipings had shaken the throne of Bogdo Khan. "No" is a very pretty word, but it must be spoken before and not afterwards, as every Chinese maiden knew. If he could have done, he would have spoken his "No" when Muravyev shipped his first transport of troops.

Next morning he sent secretaries and interpreters to Muravyev for the final drafting of the treaty. Muravyev did not worry about small points. The Chinese did not want to use the word "frontier" in connexion with the Amur. Muravyev let them have their way. "The left bank of the Amur as far as its estuary shall be the property of the Russian empire," they wrote, "but the right bank



as far as the estuary of the Ussuri shall be the property of the Chinese empire." The land between the Ussuri and the sea was to be jointly owned by the two empires.

The Chinese added that on the rivers Amur, Sungari, and Ussuri no craft other than those of the Russian and Chinese empires should be permitted to sail; and further that, in the interests of mutual friendship, trade should be permitted between the subjects of the two empires, and that the two Governments would protect the traders, and that all the provisions of this treaty should be observed with the utmost precision for all time.

When the negotiators were preparing for their farewell ceremonies, Muravyev informed them of his intention to come to Aigun with his two gunboats, in order to fire salutes in honour of the Dzan-dzun. But the Chinese, with many obeisances and broad smiles, declined his proposal. "We officials," they said, "have not the slightest objection to a salute of guns, but our soldiers do not like the sound of shooting."

Next day the treaty was signed. After Muravyev and I-Shan had each been given a copy with two signatures, one Russian and one Chinese, they simultaneously handed their copies to each other; then they embraced and parted.

Two hours later, as in the old days in the Caucasus, Muravyev had thrown off his uniform and put on a white linen blouse, and stood in the middle of his cabin, sipping champagne and dictating an Order of the Day for the army and navy of the Far East:

"Comrades! Our labours have not been in vain. The Amur has become a Russian possession!"

He proceeded to the mouth of the Zeya, where a small Cossack settlement already existed, and there on the following day he laid the foundation of the cathedral of the Annunciation ("blagoveshchenie"). "Here," he said, "will rise the city of Blagoveshchensk."

Then he descended the Amur for the third time. He proceeded into the country in which the Ginseng, the Root of Life, grew—he went toward the sun. He landed to found churches, villages, and towns. "Here a city will rise," he said at the foot of the pine-clad hills at the mouth of the Ussuri, "and it shall bear the name of Khabarov, the first conqueror of the Amur." And in the course of time there rose there the city of Khabarovsk. He was not lazy, and he was inquisitive: he sailed up the Ussuri, looked into the mouths of other rivers, climbed the mountains on their banks, and looked down from the tops on his Amur.

\* \* \*

At Nikolayevsk he held a parade, inspected the batteries, and with Nevelskoy selected the sites for new barracks and other

buildings. There were already over two hundred houses at Nikolayevsk—already it was a city.

On his way back he was met by barges and rafts moving downstream with soldiers and guns, settlers and cattle and forage. Blithely he shouted across to them his wishes for their good fortune in their new home.

He had not yet reached the Shilka when he received from a courier the news that, a fortnight after the signing of the Aigun Agreement, Count Putyatin had concluded a treaty with the Chinese Government at Tientsin. This treaty threw open China to Russian trade; but in regard to the Amur it was less definite than the Aigun Agreement, and it contained nothing about joint ownership of the Ussuri region. When it was signed, Putyatin did not know that Muravyev had secured much more at Aigun.

Muravyev could not accept this indefiniteness. He needed the Ussuri region. Both he and Nevelskoy well remembered how three years earlier their ships had narrowly escaped being shot to pieces by the British because the ice still shut off their access to the Amur. Nikolayevsk provided no solution for the problem of a Russian naval port in the Far East. That port must lie farther south—Muravyev knew exactly where.

At Irkutsk he was greeted once more by acclamations from all Siberia. He entered the city through a triumphal arch on which the highest authorities, the clergy, and the people were represented. Troops lined the road to his palace. From every corner of Siberia and Russia came addresses, letters, and telegrams. From St Petersburg came an intimation that he had been promoted Infantry General and raised to the rank of Count.

At the Tsar's wish the new count received a new name. Plain Muravyev became Count Muravyev-Amursky. Bakunin had been right—Siberia was the Land of the New!

In the following year Muravyev went for the fourth time down his beloved river. He went out to sea, turned southward, and in a bay which he named Peter the Great Bay he spoke the words: "Here will be Vladivostok." And in the same year Russian settlers appeared there.

He visited Japan, and came to an agreement with the Mikado's Government for the cession of the northern half of Sakhalin to Russia. Then he went on to the Gulf of Chihli, and from there transmitted to the Chinese Government, by way of confirmation of the two agreements, a map of the Russo-Chinese frontier in which the Ussuri region was entered in the same colour as Siberia.

After the signing of the Treaty of Aigun, Bogdo Khan had received a present from the Russian Tsar of ten thousand rifles

and fifty guns, together with half a million roubles. The Son of Heaven, pressed from all sides, rejoiced at these gifts. He was also granted assistance in the reorganization of his army. Muravyev felt that Bogdo Khan would shed no tears over the virgin forests of the Ussuri.

His supposition proved sound, though the final assent was given not by Bogdo Khan himself but by his successor. Bogdo Khan, beleaguered by British and French troops, had yielded up the reins of government. That was in 1860. In the same year the twenty-eight-year-old Russian Minister, General Ignatyev, concluded, after long negotiations in Peking, a new treaty which confirmed the agreements of Aigun and Tientsin. The Amur and the Ussuri were recognized as the frontier between Russia and China.

At the time when this treaty was signed, work at Vladivostok was already in full swing: barracks and a harbour and forts were being built.

\* \* \*

Muravyev had fulfilled his main mission, and there was really nothing much more for him to do in Siberia. There was, of course, much still to be done, but he considered that others could do it. The count's authority in Siberia was unchallengeable: he was loved and feared. But he was autocratic, arbitrary, and always ready to stake his life and the lives of others—and such men have many enemies. In earlier times enemies had sent denunciations to the Government; now they sent letters to the newspaper—Russian and foreign—and that was a good deal worse. A new enemy, old Savalishin, particularly distinguished himself. His envenomed criticism of the mistakes Muravyev had made in the settlement of peasants and in the withdrawal of troops from the Amur—there had been plenty of other mistakes as well—made him thoroughly unpopular with the Governor-General. Muravyev even expelled him from Irkutsk and sent him to Chita. Savalishin began to send rancorous articles to an influential naval journal at St Petersburg, which gladly printed them.

There in St Petersburg were enemies in plenty. They spread stories that Muravyev was dreaming of separating Siberia from Russia and proclaiming himself dictator. Nobody abused him—on the contrary, everyone recognized his energy, his courage, his talent. "Only it is such a pity that he is not as devoted as he should be to the throne," casually remarked his "admirers."

Muravyev was well aware of all this. He knew that he was no longer trusted in St Petersburg. He was tired, and in addition to his liver his heart was now affected. He went to St Petersburg,

and had a long audience with Tsar Alexander II, in which he set out the main problems of Siberia and suggested the name of a successor for himself; then he sent in his resignation. On February 19, 1861, his resignation was accepted—it was the historic date of the abolition of serfdom.

The Tsar thanked Muravyev in a special rescript in which he recounted all his services. He rewarded him with yet another star, and appointed him a member of the Council of State. There Muravyev, with many other important old gentlemen, had to pass resolutions on momentous affairs of state—fully aware that these resolutions committed nobody to anything.

In spite of all this, it was difficult to believe that Count Muravyev-Amursky would so easily be buried in that mass-mausoleum of old servants of the State. Rumours went about in the capital of his impending appointment as Governor of the Caucasus, and then as Governor of Poland. The Prussian Minister in St Petersburg, Otto von Bismarck, reported these rumours to Berlin. He expressed the opinion that the Polish appointment was unlikely in view of the count's "blunt character."

But Muravyev received no appointment. He went to Paris, and there passed the remainder of his life. From there he followed Siberian affairs. They brought him no satisfaction. Almost immediately after his departure the colonization of the Amur and Ussuri regions came almost completely to an end. Then came the rising of the Polish exiles. In Europe this aroused much comment. "Nephew" Bakunin went on some pretext out through the Amur estuary, sailed across the "Mediterranean of the future" to America, and then went to London. There he put his friend Herzen through a thorough interrogation as to the European situation, and when he heard that there was no prospect of a revolution anywhere he exclaimed in distress:

"Where can I go, then? To Persia? To India?"

The untamable old Savalishin continued his abuse. His articles in the periodicals of St Petersburg put Muravyev's successor, General Korssakov, into such fury that he made a decision unprecedented in the history of Siberia: in 1862 he exiled the half-deaf and half-blind Savalishin from Siberia—to Moscow!

Muravyev settled permanently in Paris; he went only now and then to Russia. The last time was in 1878, three years before his death. He went by train: the railway from Warsaw to St Petersburg had recently been built. Muravyev entered a coach and saw through the door opening into the next compartment a group engaged in lively conversation. Three gentlemen were talking about Siberia. Should he not stop a moment and listen? The gentlemen were not of the lower orders: they were travelling first

class, and all three wore well-groomed whiskers and one even a monocle!

"What do you think!" said the first gentleman; "yet more new plans! We are to squander money on a railway in Siberia, after it has been thoroughly proved that it is quite superfluous. Instead of supporting the truly loyal Russian nobility, they want to introduce cheap Siberian corn here, to bring us to final ruin."

"It's all the work of the banks," said the second gentleman, "and of all sorts of speculators. We have seen enough experiments in Siberia! That man Muravyev sent settlers there—and afterwards he himself admitted that it had come to nothing."

"Which Muravyev are you talking of?" asked the third gentleman. "The one who used to have the village elders flogged?"

The little old gentleman in the passage pulled excitedly at his white moustache, turned round abruptly, and walked through the rocking carriage back to his compartment.

\* \* \*

This does not end the history of Siberia. It goes on beyond Muravyev, but then it becomes world history. And as such it belongs already to our own time. The historiographer of the old Siberia may close his chronicle with the days and deeds of her last conqueror, who brought Russia to where she stands today.

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- 9th cent. First Varangian migrations into Perm.  
 11th cent. Predominance of Kiev; beginning of Novgorodian independence.
- 1032 }  
 1079 } Novgorodian migrations across the Urals.  
 1096 }
- 12th cent. First Novgorodian trade relations with Lübeck.  
 1169 }  
 1187 } Novgorodian campaigns beyond the Urals.  
 1193 }
- 13th cent. Predominance of Novgorod. Novgorod joins the Hanseatic League.  
 1240 Tatar capture of Kiev.
- 14th cent. Tatars subjugate northern Russia with the exception of Novgorod; Moscow's rise begins. Novgorodian penetration into Perm.
- 1323 }  
 1329 } Novgorodian migrations beyond the Urals.  
 1357 }  
 1364 }
- 1383 Saint Stephen founds the diocese of Perm.  
 1471 Ivan III destroys the Novgorodian army. The Stroganovs move from the Dvina country to Solvychevodsk.
- 1473 Moscow annexes the region of Perm (Cherdyn).  
 1478 End of Novgorodian independence.  
 1480 End of Tatar domination.
- 1483 First Muscovite campaign in the Ugrian region; the Pelym region reduced to paying tribute to Ivan III.
- 1489 Moscow annexes Vyatka (Kholmogory).  
 1499 Second Muscovite campaign in the Ugrian region.  
 1547 Ivan the Terrible ascends the throne.  
 1552 Moscow subjugates Kazan.  
 1553 English arrive at Kholmogory.  
 1555 The Siberian Khan Etiger appeals for the friendship of Moscow and offers to pay tribute.
- 1558 Conveyance of the region of Perm to the Stroganovs by Tsar's rescript.
- 1563 Kuchum becomes Tsar of Siberia.  
 1567 Expedition of Petrov and Yalychev to China.  
 1570 Death of Anika Stroganov.  
 1572 Mahmetkul falls upon the Stroganovs.  
 1574 Conveyance of Siberian territory to the Stroganovs by Tsar's rescript.
- 1581 Yermak's campaign.  
 1582 Capture of Isker. First imposition of exile to Siberia as added penalty.

- 1584 Death of Yermak. Death of Ivan the Terrible.
- 1585 Founding of Tyumen, the first Russian town in Siberia.
- 1586 The first church built in Siberia (at Tyumen).
- 1598 Death of Kuchum.
- 1604 Founding of the first Siberian monastery, at Tyumen.
- 1633 First fur fair, at Irbit.
- 1637 Creation of the "Sibirsky Prikas" (Siberian Ministry).
- 1643-46 Poyarkov's travels on the Amur.
- 1644 Stadukhin reaches the Kolyma.
- 1647 Stadukhin penetrates to Penshina.
- 1648 Deshnev discovers Bering Straits.
- 1649 Founding of Okhotsk. Exile to Siberia instituted as a separate punishment for criminal offences.
- 1649-50 Khabarov's first campaign on the Amur.
- 1650-53 Khabarov's second campaign on the Amur.
- 1658 Chinese burn down Albazin.
- 1662 Kiang-Hi ascends the Chinese throne.
- 1667 Beginning of schism in Russia. The first map of Siberia issued in Tobolsk.
- 1682 Peter and Ivan ascend the throne as minors.
- 1685 Chinese burn down Albazin for the second time.
- 1686 Third siege of Albazin.
- 1687 Galdan's Kalmuks fall upon Golovin at Selenginsk.
- 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk.
- 1697-98 First of Peter the Great's travels abroad. Leibnitz transmits a memorandum to the Tsar.
- 1697-99 Atlasov conquers Kamchatka.
- 1700 First silver-mine opened at Nerchinsk.
- 1701 The first Japanese comes to Russia. First atlas of Siberia completed by Remetsov.
- 1716 First ship sails from Okhotsk to Kamchatka. Leibnitz personally submits to Peter the Great the plan of an expedition to the American coast.
- 1722 Nerchinsk "katorga" (prison) erected.
- 1725 Death of Peter the Great (January 28).
- 1726 Decree against the enslavement of natives.
- 1727 Treaty of Kyakhta.
- 1728 Bering's first voyage (July 13 to September 1).
- 1728-30 Shestakov's expedition to the country of the Chukchis.
- 1730 First copper-mines opened in the Altai mountains.
- 1730-31 General rising in Kamchatka.
- 1730-40 Attempts at agricultural settlement in Kamchatka.
- 1732 Expedition of Fyodorov and Gvozдов to the Bering Straits.
- 1732-43 "Great" Bering expedition.
- 1737 Copper found in Transbaikalia.
- 1741-42 Bering's second voyage.
- 1741 Bering's death (December 8).
- 1741 Decree for protection of natives.
- 1741 Chirikov's voyage (June 4 to October 8).
- 1745 First gold found in the ores of the Altai mountains.

- 1746 Death of Steller. J. G. Gmelin publishes the first volume of *Flora Sibirica*.
- 1748 Death of Chirikov. Decree for the reduction of fur tribute.
- 1750 G. F. Müller publishes the first volume of the *Description of the Siberian Realm*.
- 1755 S. Krashennnikov's *Description of the Country of Kamchatka* published.
- 1759 Glotov reaches Alaskan mainland.
- 1760 Chicherin settles the Baraba steppe.
- 1763 Decree for the protection of natives.
- 1768 J. E. Fischer's *Sibirische Geschichte* published.
- 1783-87 Shelekhov takes possession of Kadiak.
- 1783 Settlement of the "tract" from Yakutsk to Okhotsk.
- 1786 The gold-mines of Nerchinsk become private property of the Tsarist family.
- 1787 La Pérouse reaches Kamchatka.
- 1789 First printing-works at Tobolsk.
- 1790 Baranov goes to America.
- 1792 Lieutenant Laxman institutes relations with Japan.
- 1793 First newspaper in Siberia (at Tobolsk). First religious mission to the American islands.
- 1798 Baranov founds Arkhangelsk on his island.
- 1799 Founding of the Russo-American Company. Attempts at agricultural colonization in Transbaikalia.
- 1803-6 Krusenstern's voyage round the world.
- 1806 Davydov and Khvostov "annex" Sakhalin. Rezanov at San Francisco.
- 1808 Mamia Rinso explores the Amur estuary.
- 1812 Founding of Ross Colony in California.
- 1815 Dr Scheffer receives a concession for the Sandwich Islands.
- 1819 Death of Baranov.
- 1823 Monroe Doctrine proclaimed.
- 1824-25 Frontiers of Alaska determined.
- 1825 Rising of the Dekabrists. Decree for the reduction of fur tribute.
- 1830 First Polish rising.
- 1835 Private working of gold-mines permitted.
- 1846 Gavrilov's secret expedition to the Amur estuary.
- 1849 Nevelskoy proves the Amur estuary to be navigable.
- 1850 Nevelskoy founds Nikolayevsk. Muravyev turns Transbaikalian peasants into Cossacks.
- 1853-56 Crimean War.
- 1854 First transport of troops on the Amur.
- 1855 Second transport of troops.
- 1858 Treaty of Aigun. Treaty of Tientsin.
- 1859 North Sakhalin comes to Russia.
- 1860 Treaty of Peking. Founding of Vladivostok.
- 1861 Muravyev's resignation.
- 1867 Russia sells Alaska to the United States.



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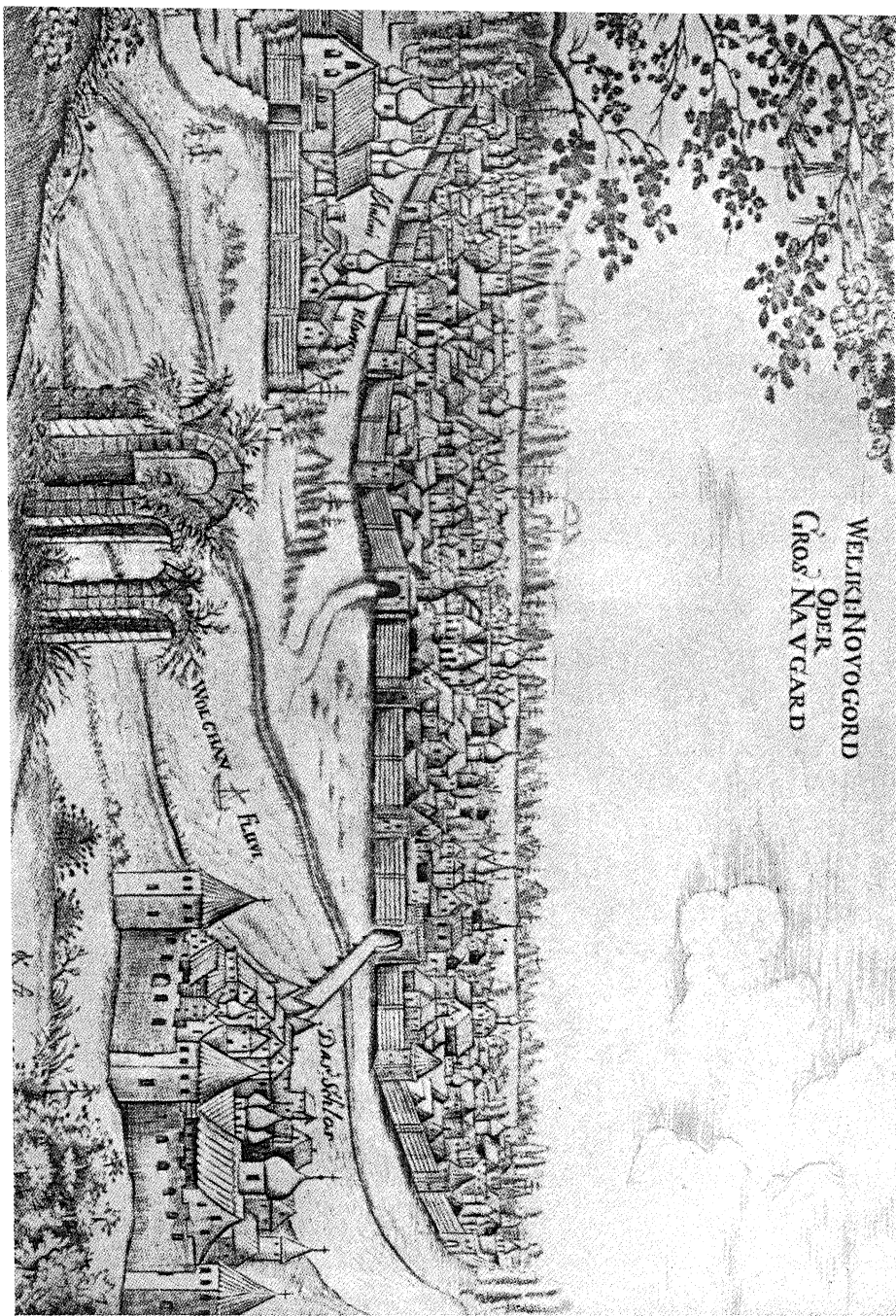
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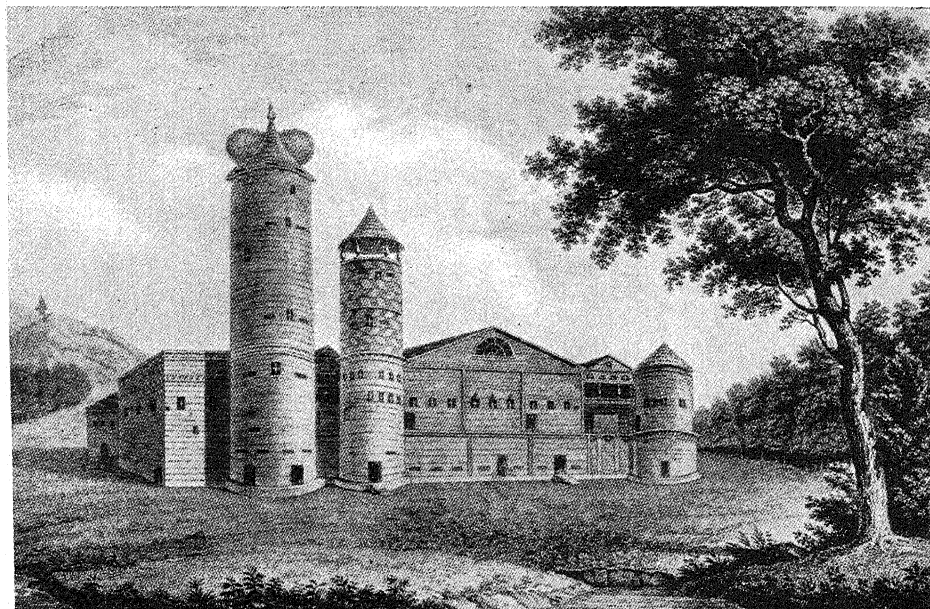




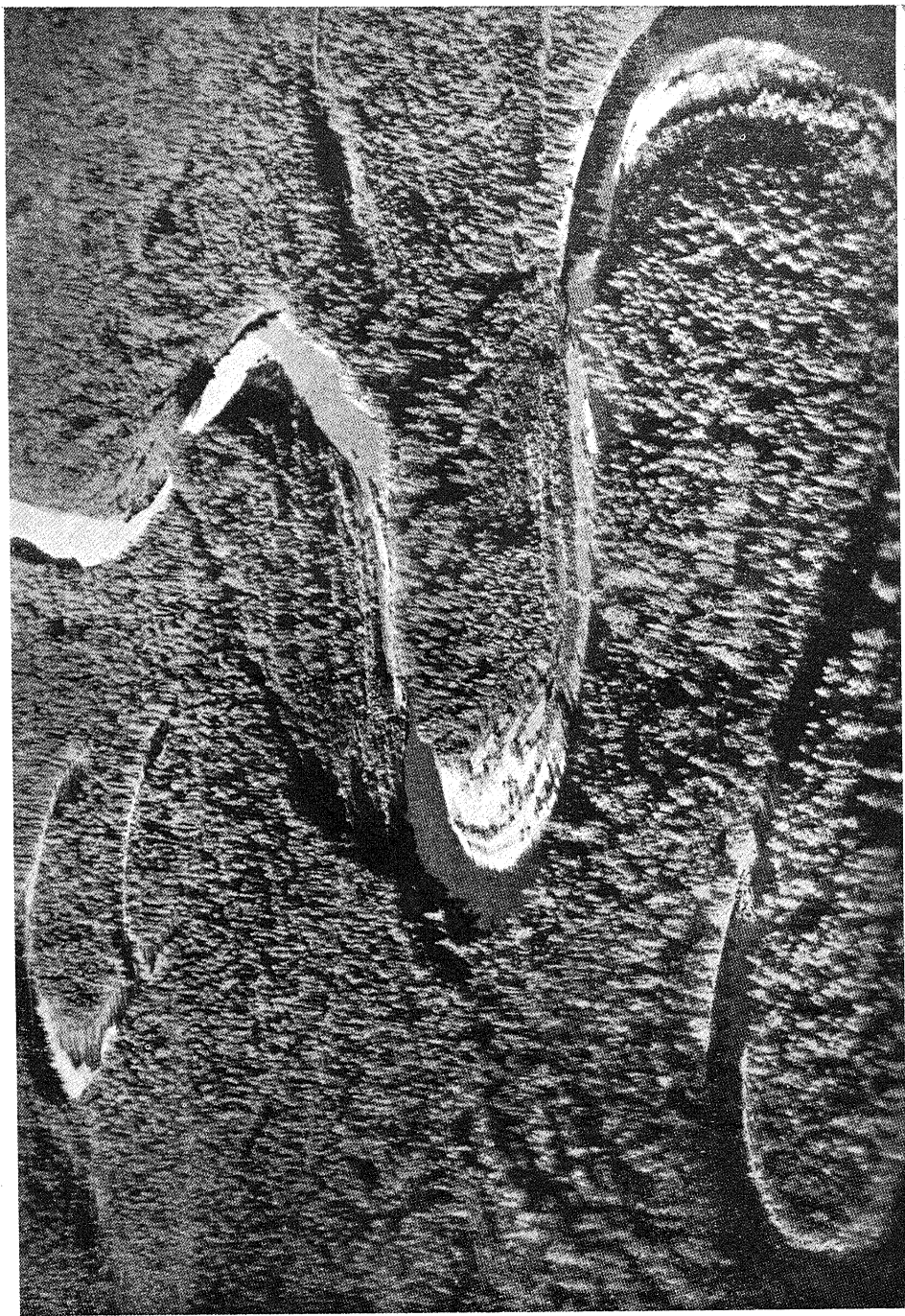
Novgorod in the seventeenth century



Cathedral of St Sophia, Novgorod, as  
it appeared in the twelfth century



The wooden house of the Stroganovs in 1565. It was the family seat  
for 233 years

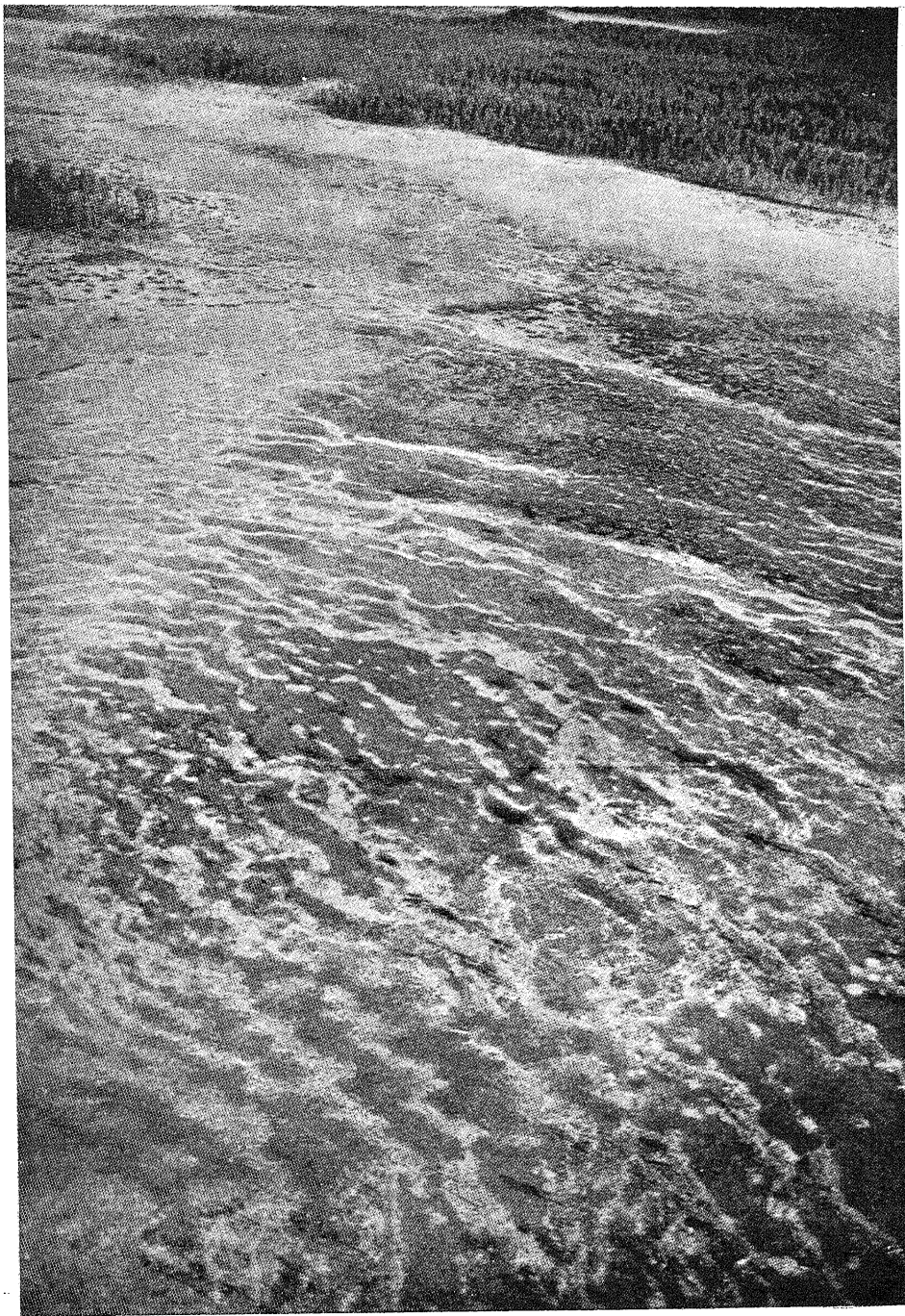


Anika Stroganov's wilderness

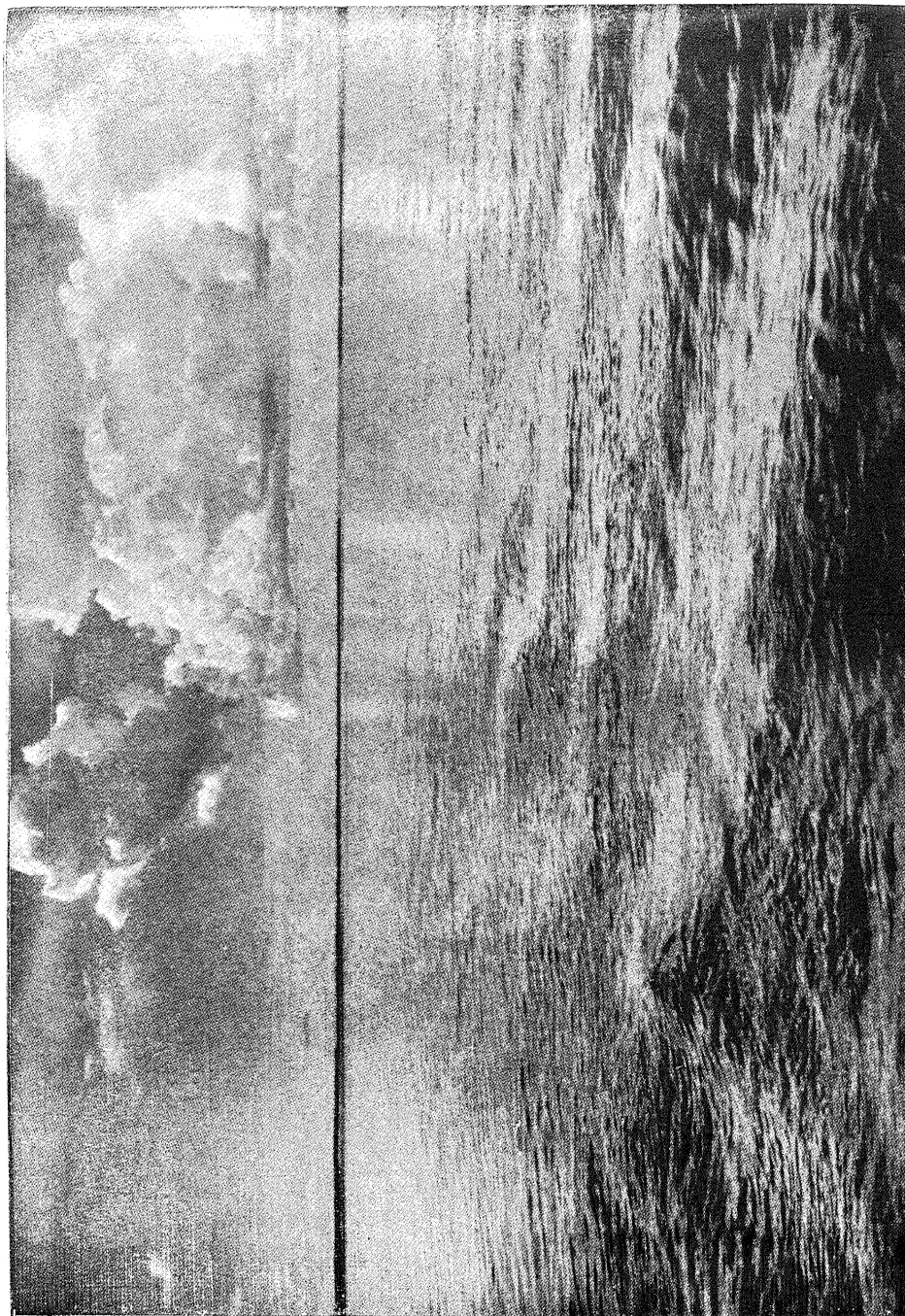




Drifting ice that blocks the passage through the Arctic "to China"



Where the “taiga” (forest land) ends and the “tundra” (ice-bound marsh) begins

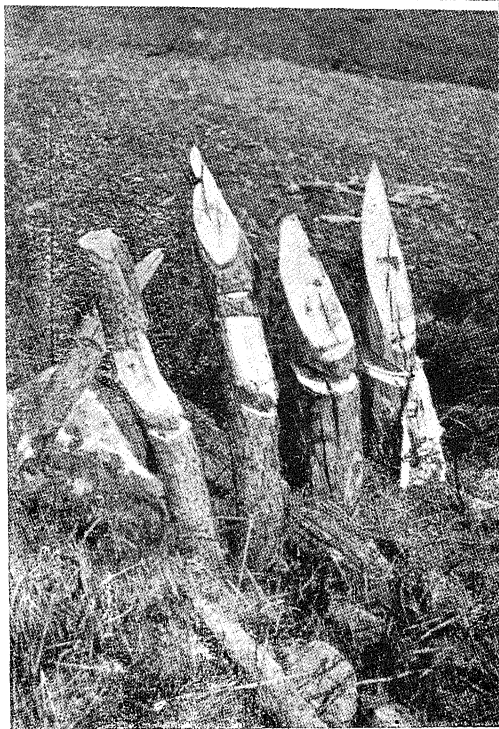


The river Lena



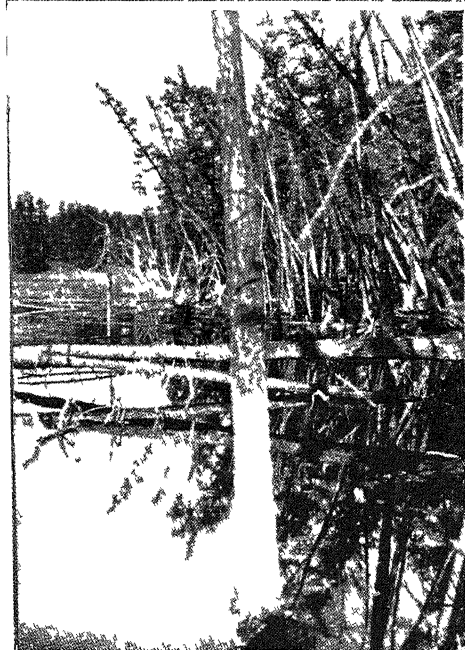


An Ostyak settlement on the Yenisei



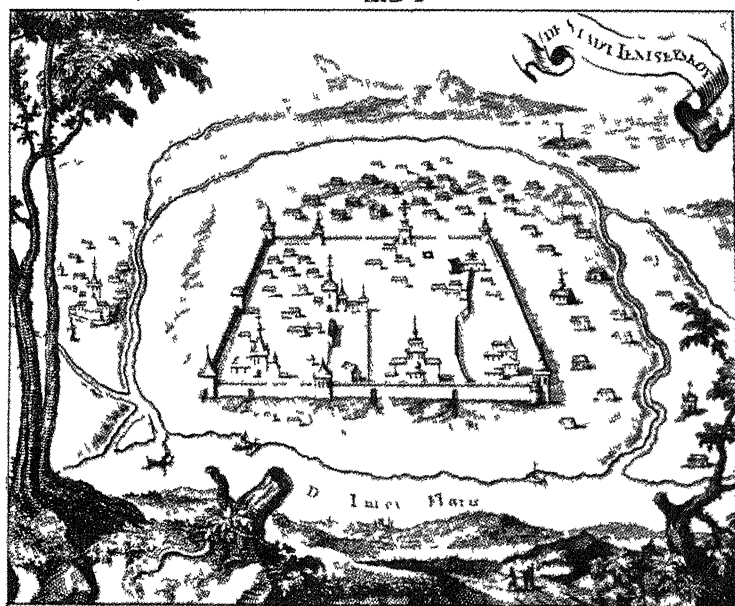
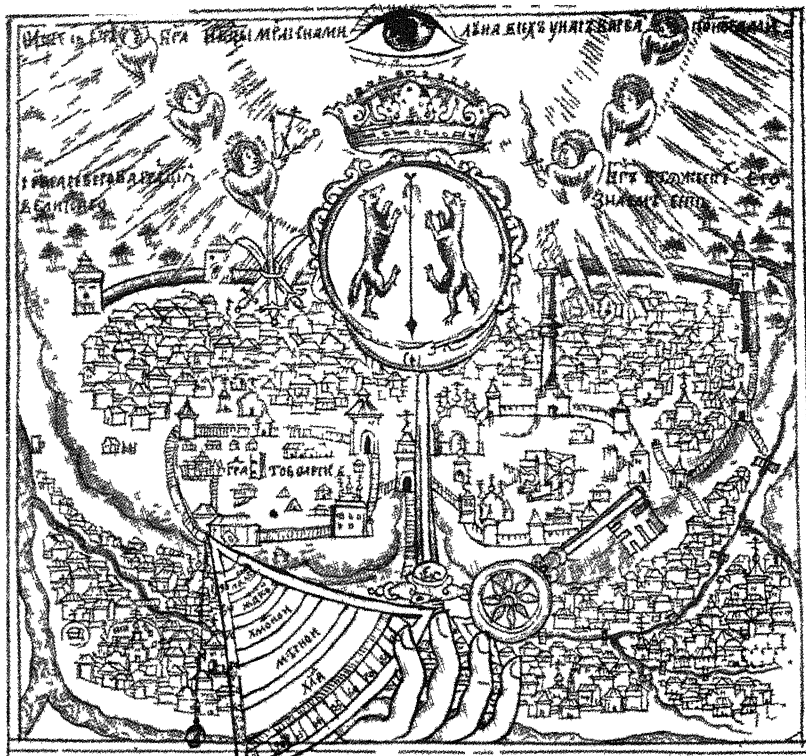
Ostyak idols



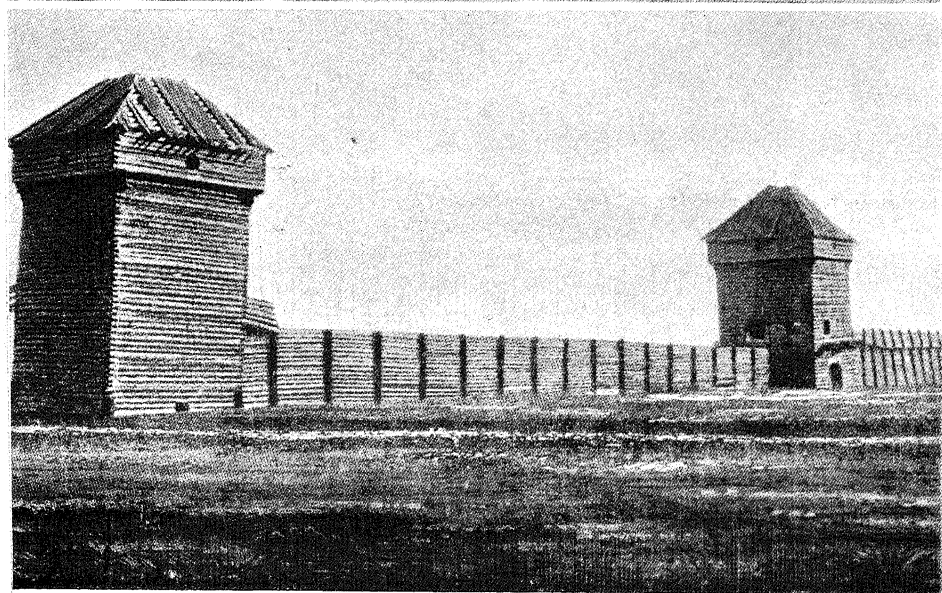
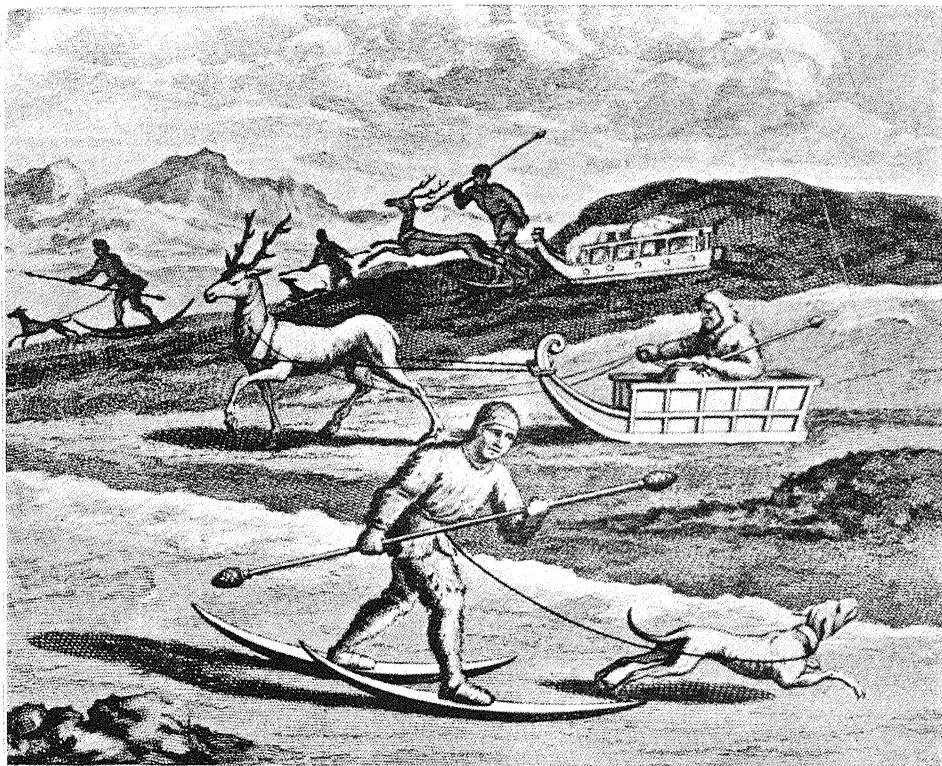


*Top* Settlement on ice-bound soil by the Lena

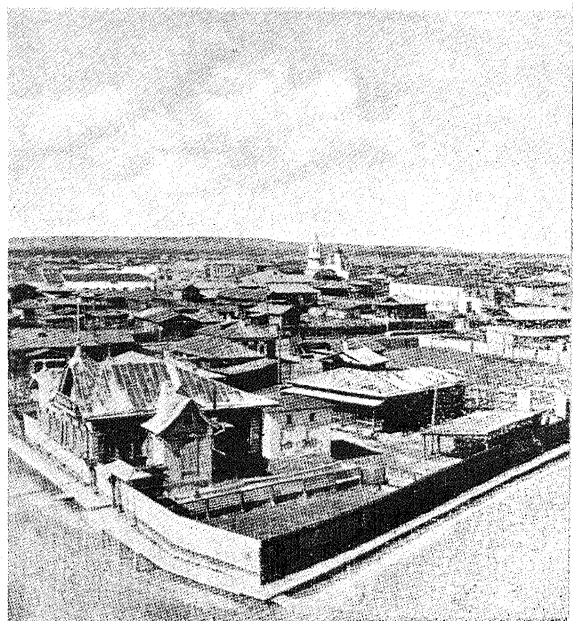
*Bottom* If the soil thaws the tree-roots lose their hold The forest dies



*Top.* Tobolsk in the seventeenth century In the circle is the town's coat of arms, with sables  
*Bottom:* Yeniseisk, from an early copper engraving



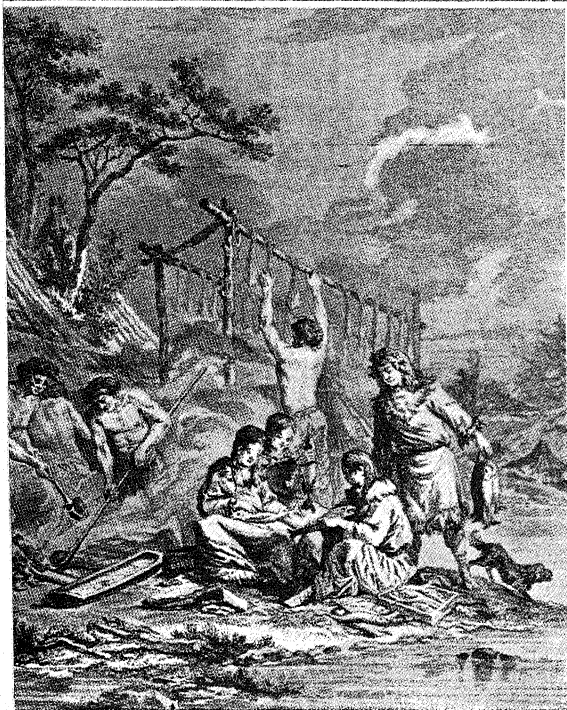
*Top:* Yakut means of transport: a Dutch eighteenth-century engraving  
*Bottom:* The "ostrog" (fortress-prison) of Yakutsk at the beginning of the twentieth century



*Top:* Yakutsk in the eighteenth century. *Bottom:* Yakutsk in the twentieth century

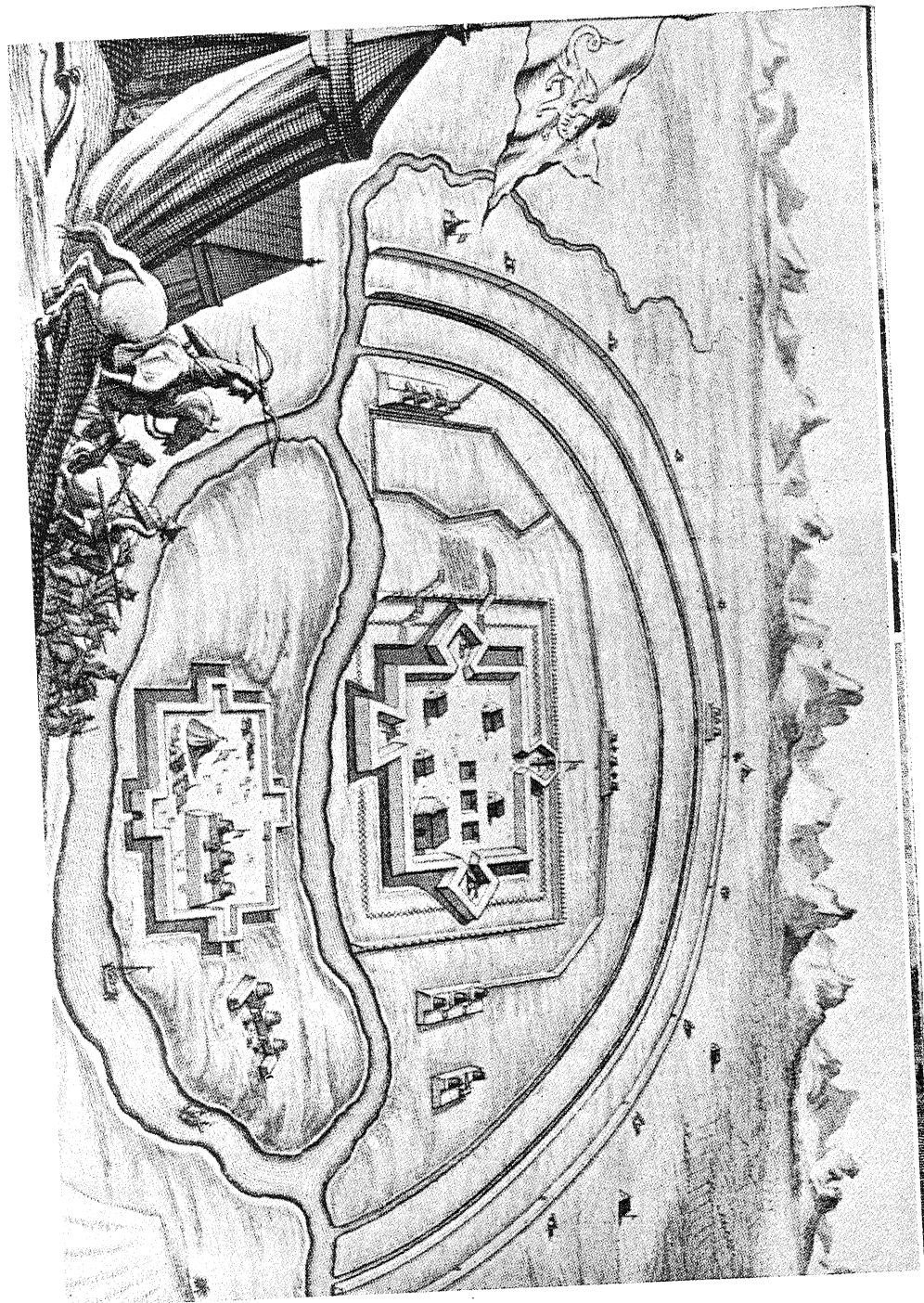


Okhotsk in the eighteenth century

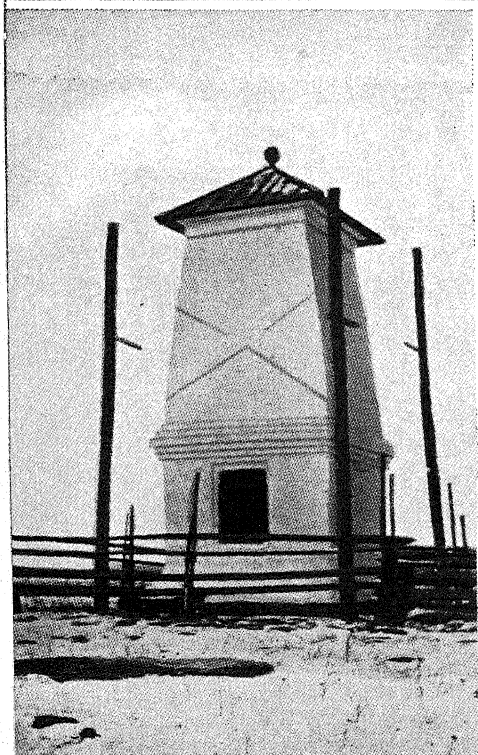


Kamchadals curing fish  
French illustration in Krashen-  
innikov's book on Kamchatka

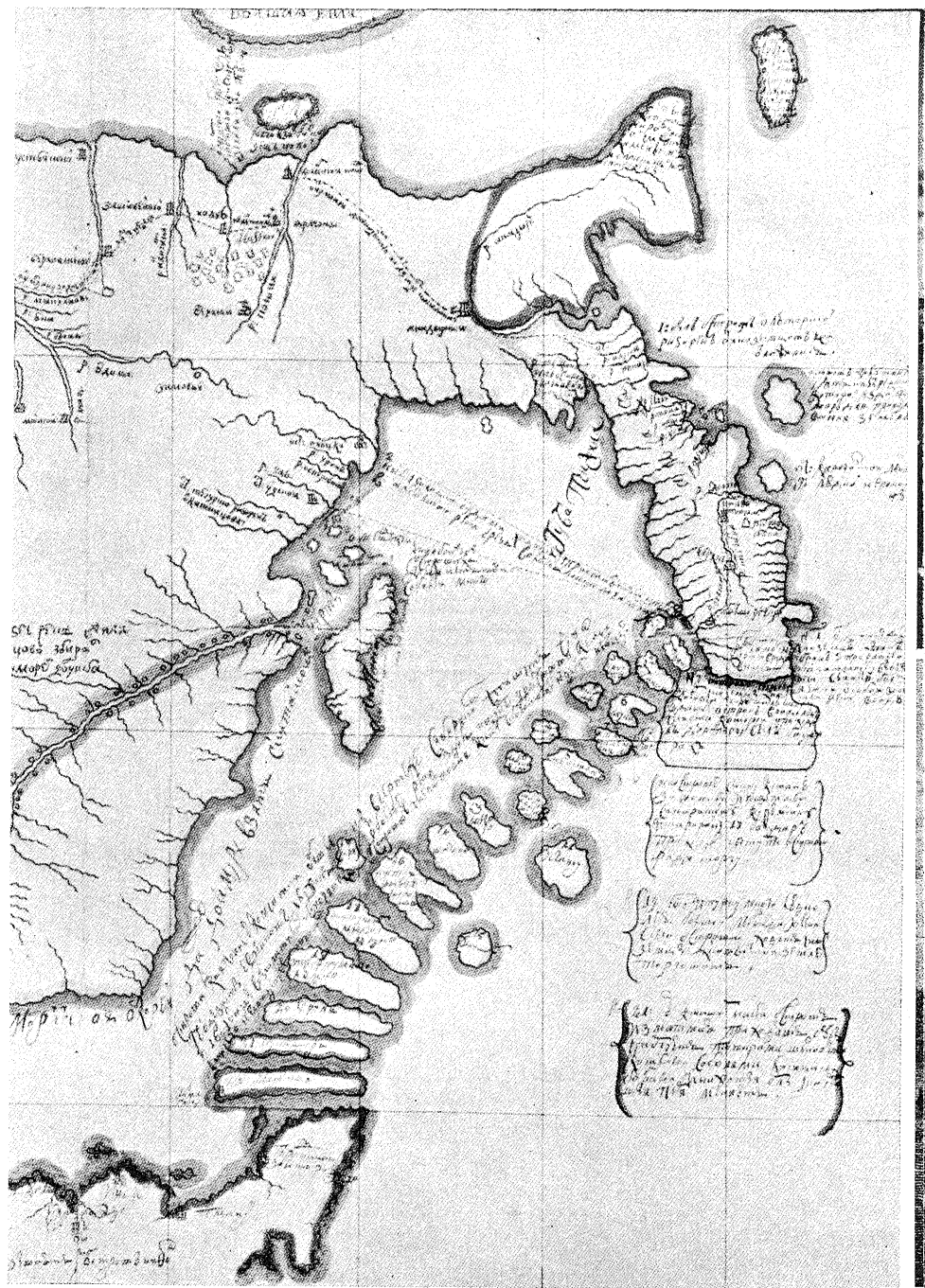




The Chinese siege of Albazin. Contemporary engraving

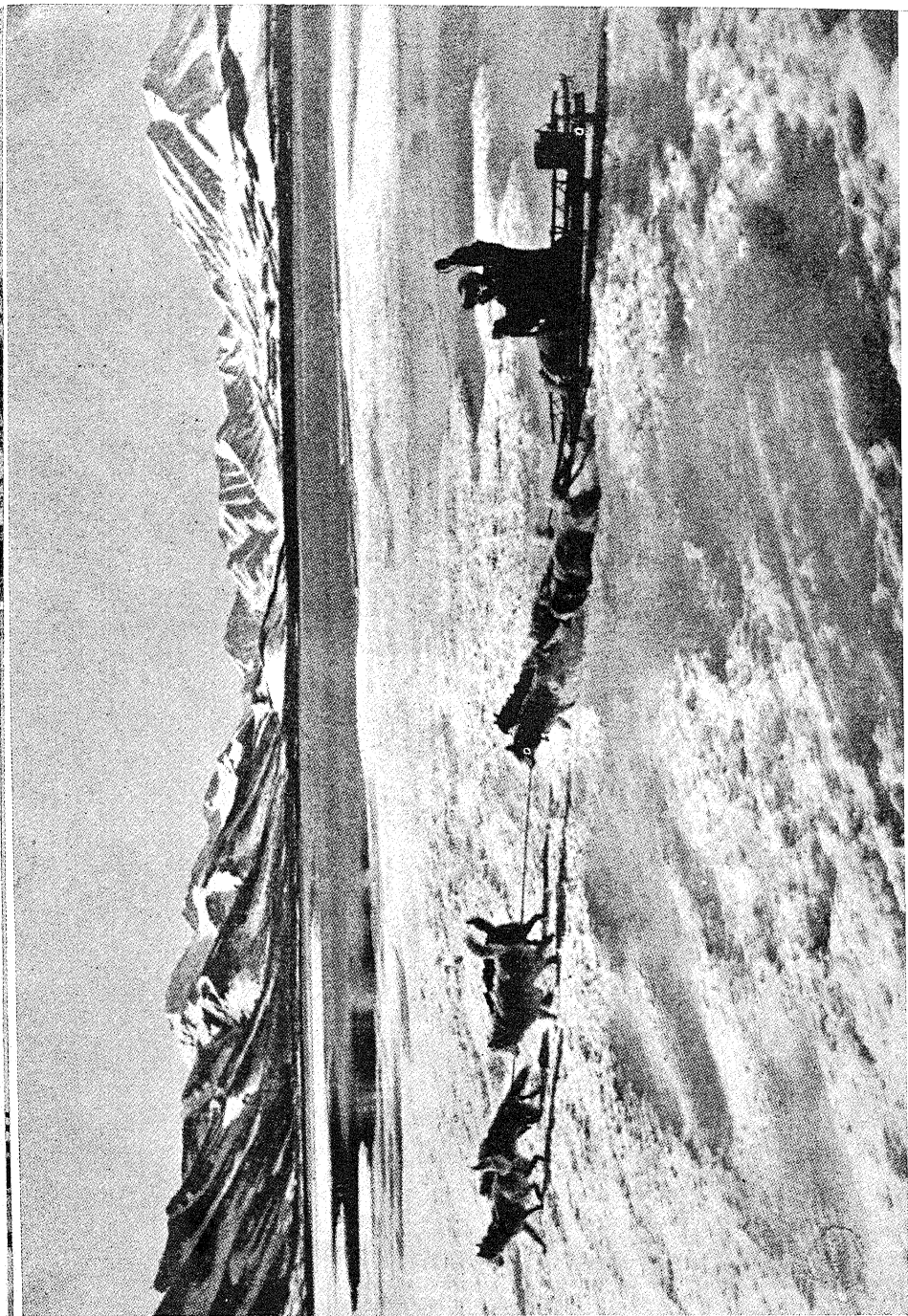


Top: Nerchinsk, about 1700. From a Dutch engraving  
 Bottom: A frontier fort between Siberia and Mongolia, built after  
 the treaty of Kyakhta (1727)

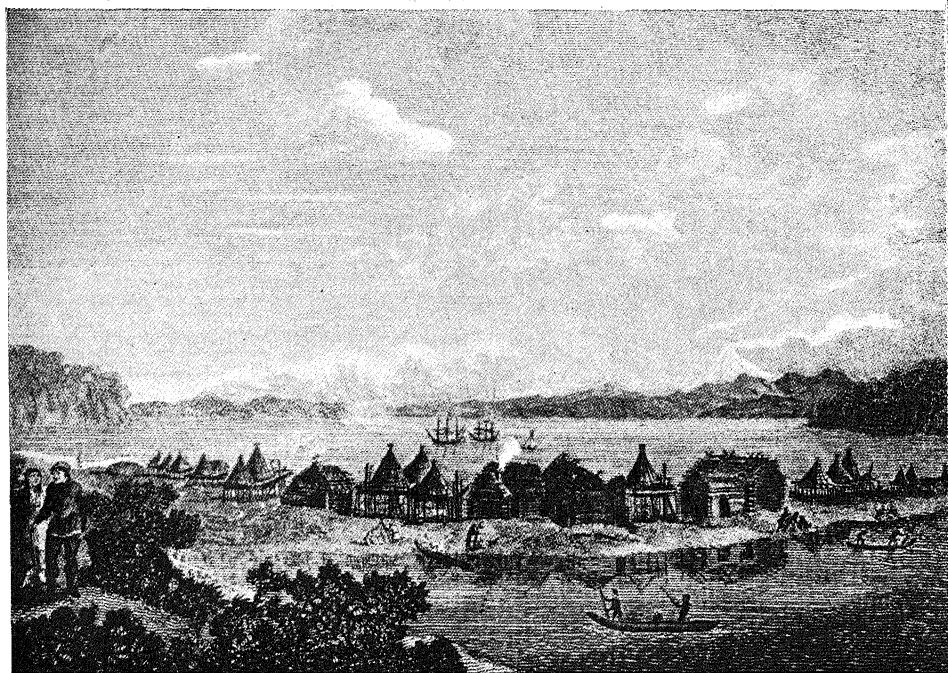


Kirilov's map of eastern Siberia, drawn before Bering's expedition and published in 1734. It was based on a Jesuit's map of China, on Kosyrevsky's map of the Kuril Islands, and on reports from Russian navigators





Carrying the mail across Kamchatka

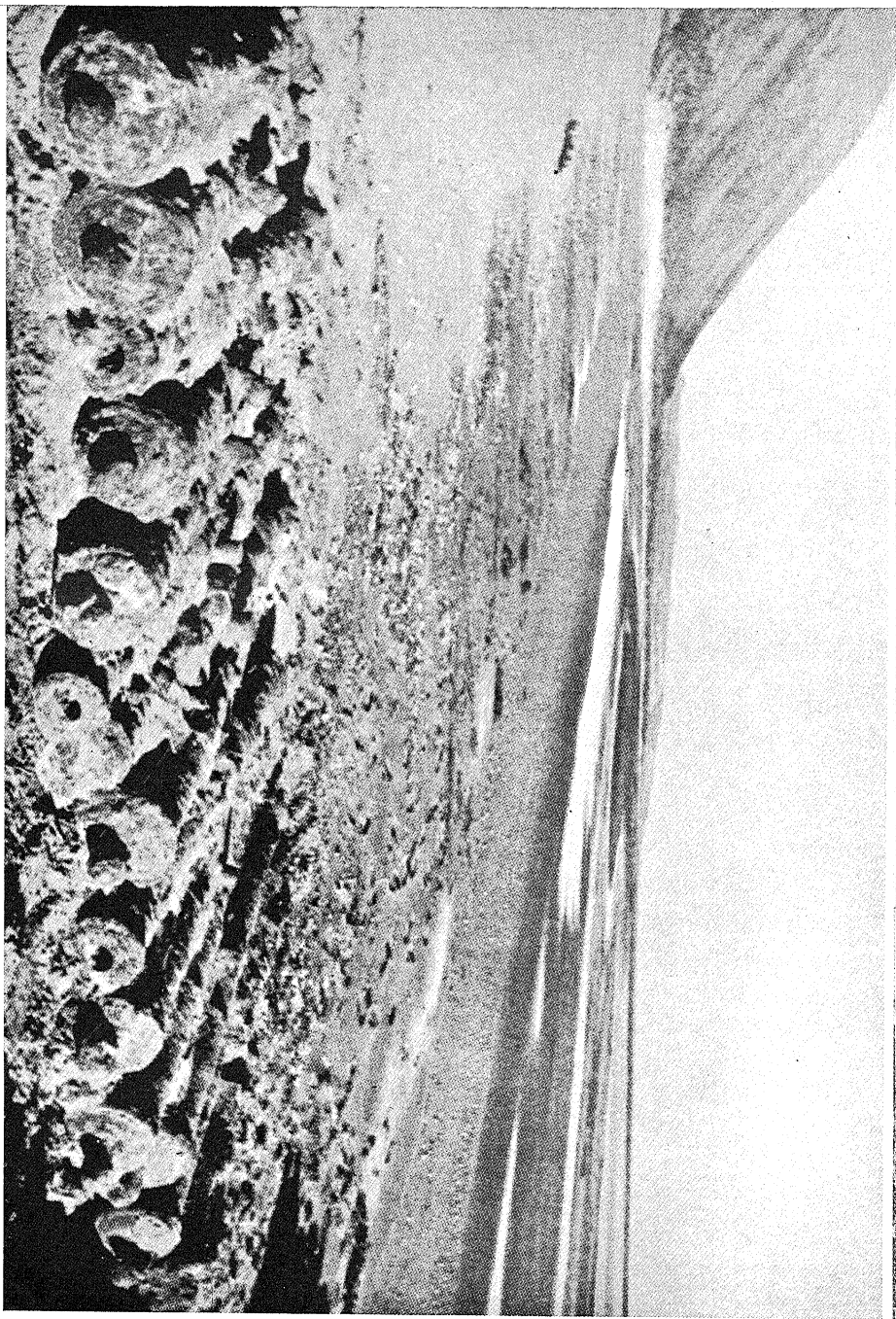


*Top:* Northernmost point of the Continent : the Taimyr peninsula  
in summer

*Bottom:* Avacha Bay, Kamchatka. Eighteenth-century engraving







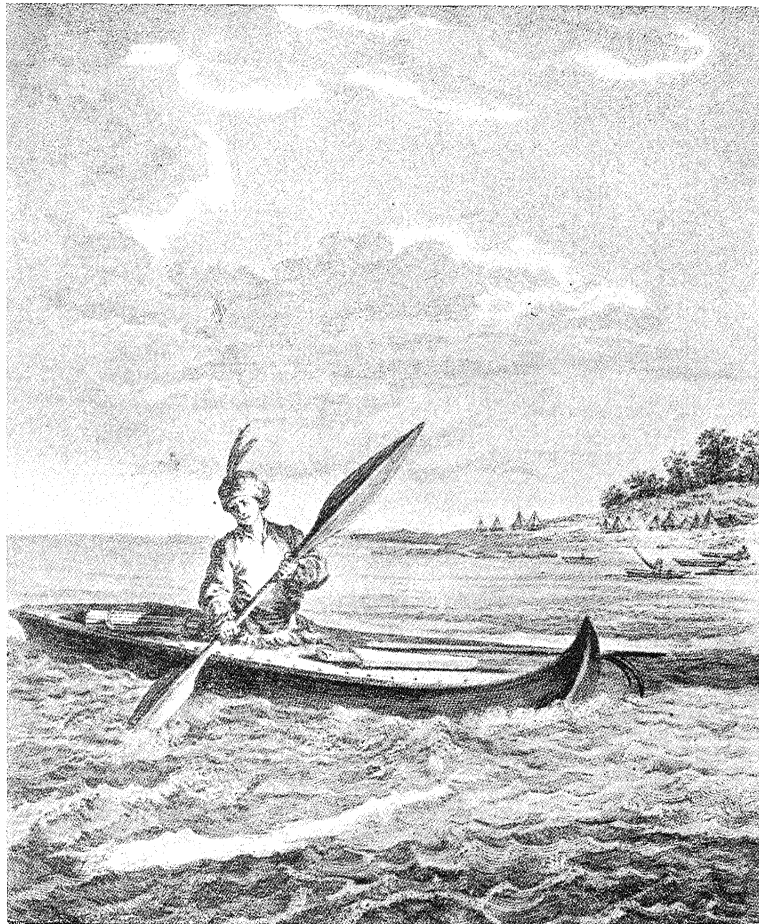
The last of Bering and the *St Peter*. Rusty cannon on the beach of Bering Island



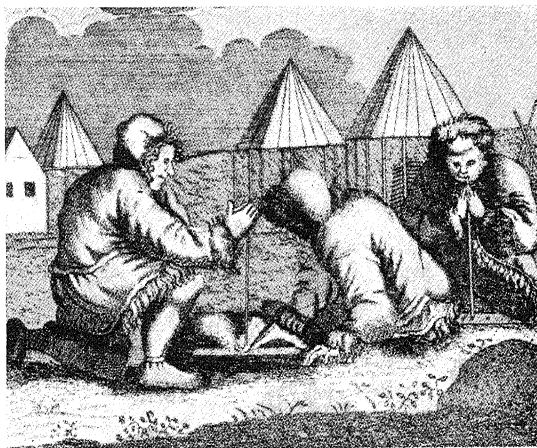
The scene of Benyovsky's exploits : Bolsheryetsk, the former "capital" of Kamchatka, in 1780



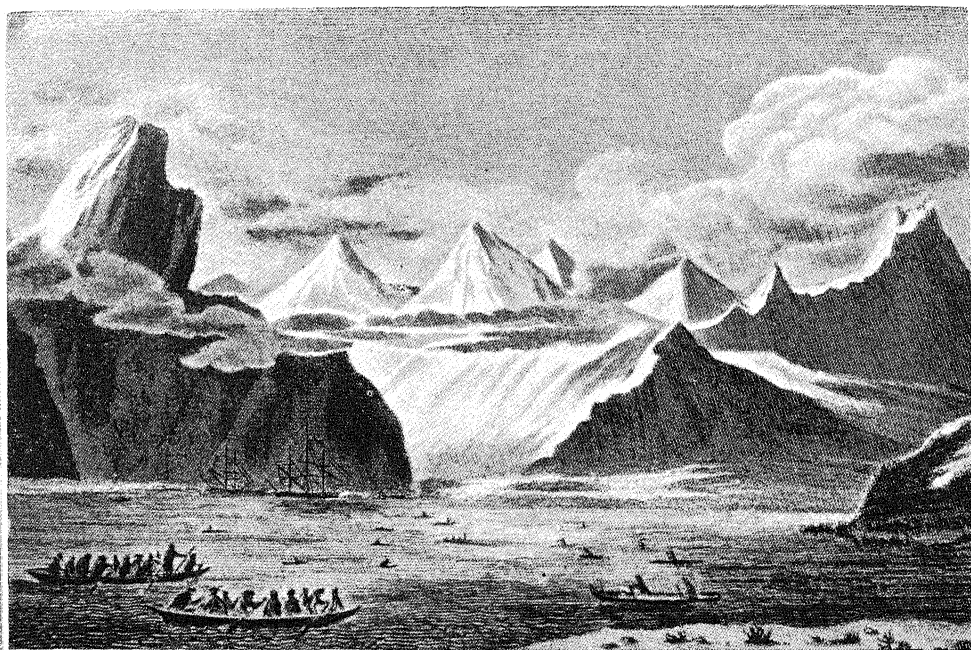
Count Moritz August Benyovsky



A "baidarka." In these sealskin coracles the Kamchadals made long voyages



Kamchadals making fire. From Steller's account of his travels



The Russians' first glimpse of Alaska.  
Eighteenth-century engraving

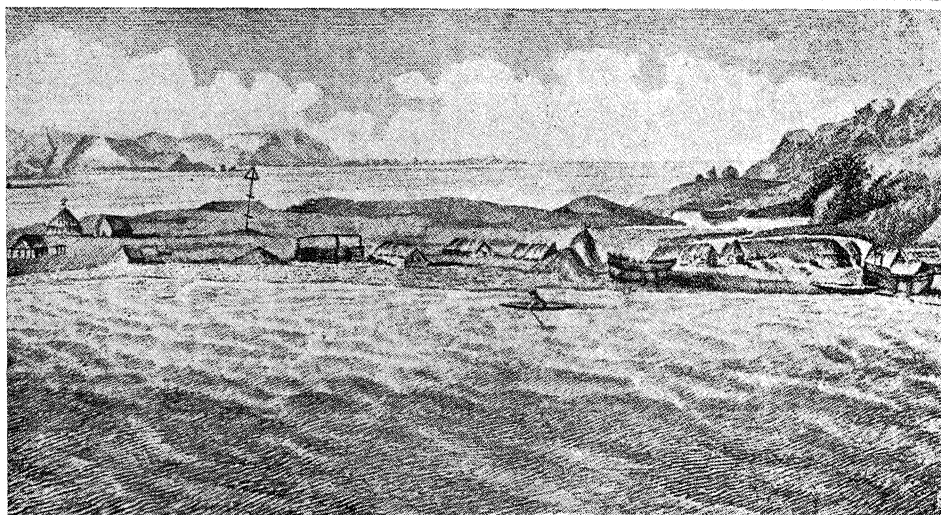


An Aleutian couple. French traveller's  
drawing



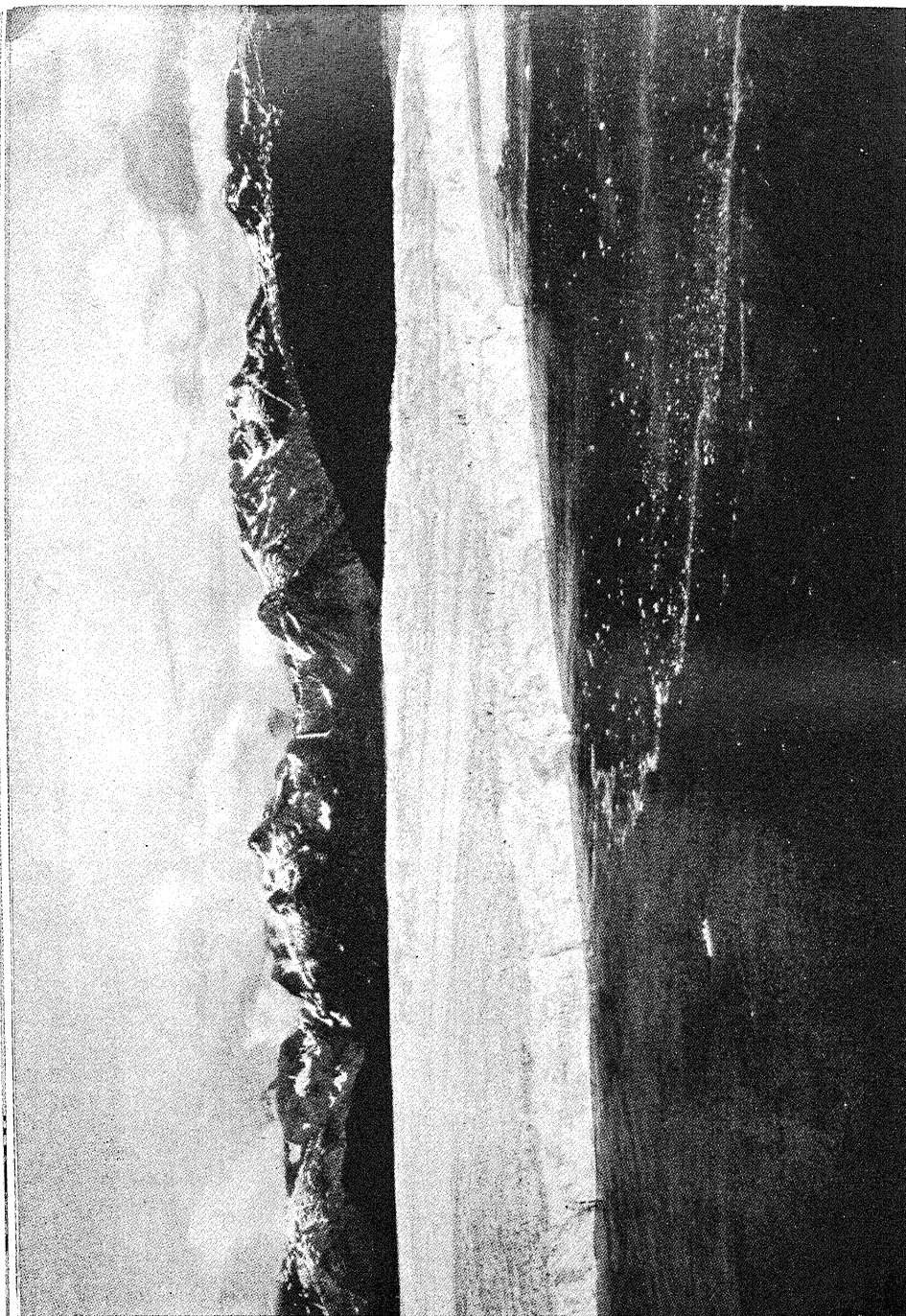


Grigori Ivanovich  
Shelekhov



Shelekhov's settlement on Kadiak Island. Contemporary picture

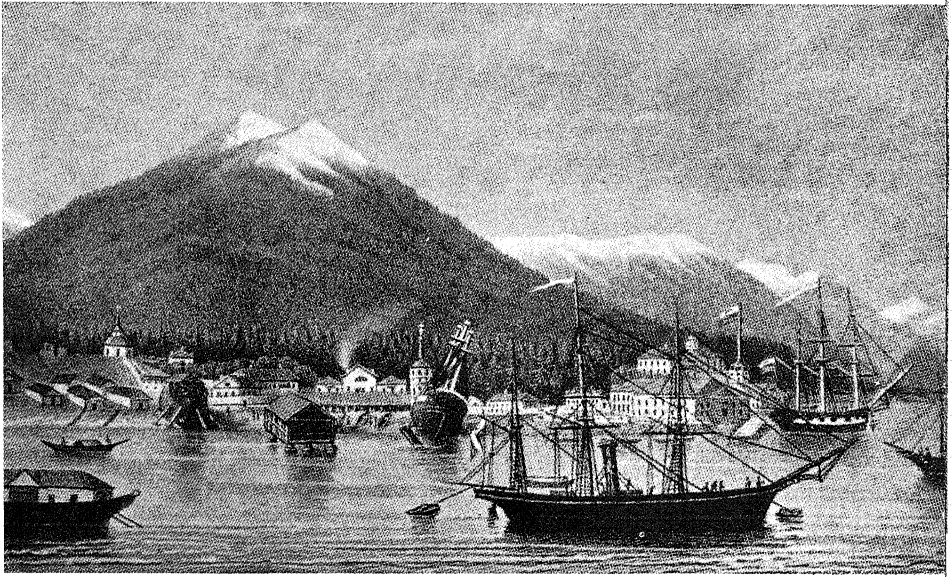




Baranov's realm



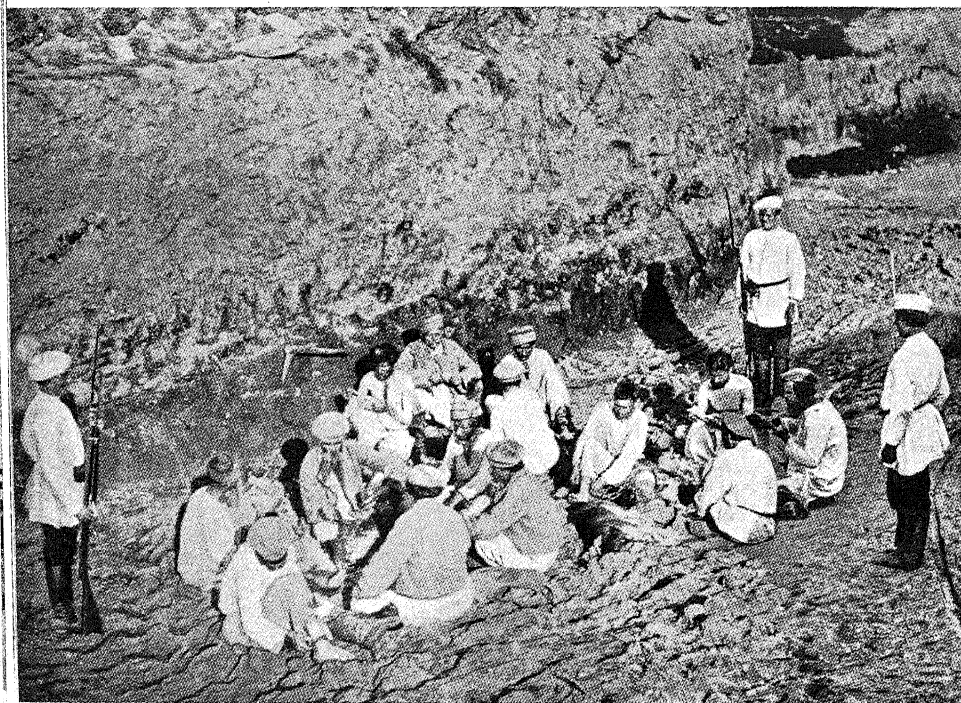
Alexander Andreyevich Baranov



Baranov's "capital," Novo-Arkhangelsk, in the middle of the nineteenth century



Dr Friedrich Joseph Haas



Prisoners in "Haas" shackles

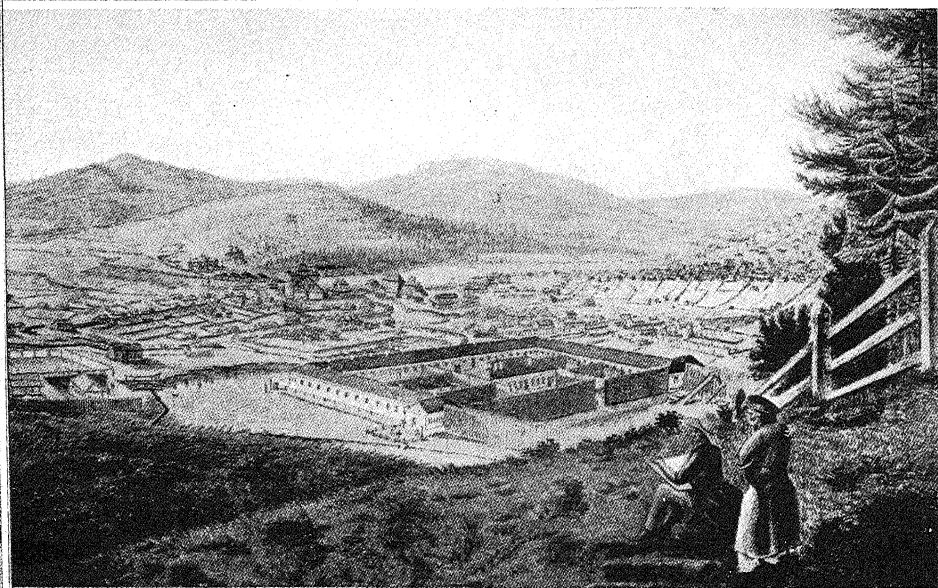




*Top:* Southern border of the "taiga" : a new settlement  
*Bottom:* In the 19th century prisoners built roads through this "taiga"



Princess Katharina Trubetskoy.  
Contemporary  
portrait

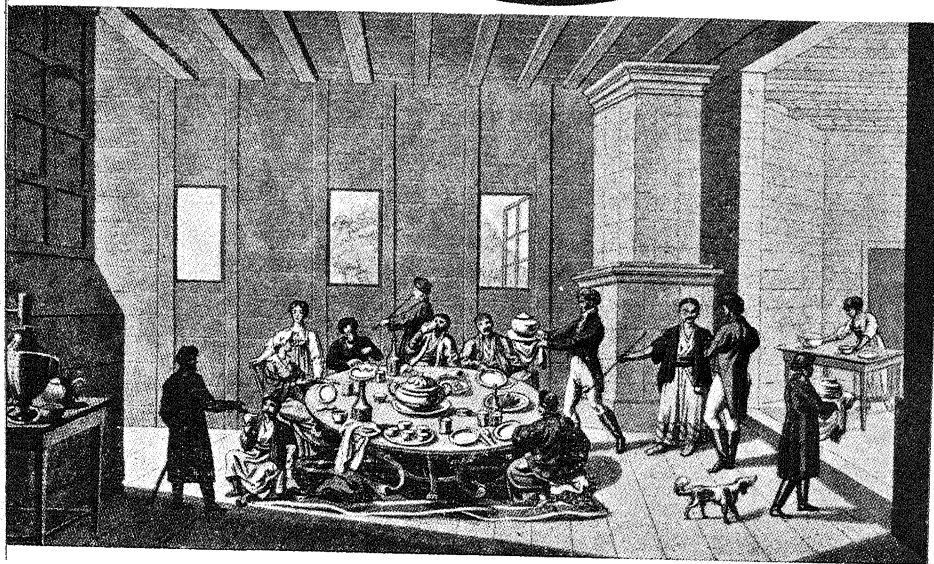


Special prison built for the Dekabrist by the Petrovsky Works

Princess Maria Volkonsky  
in Siberia. Water-colour  
portrait by the Dekabrist  
Bestushev



In this hut lived the Princesses Volkonsky and Trubetskoy in Siberia

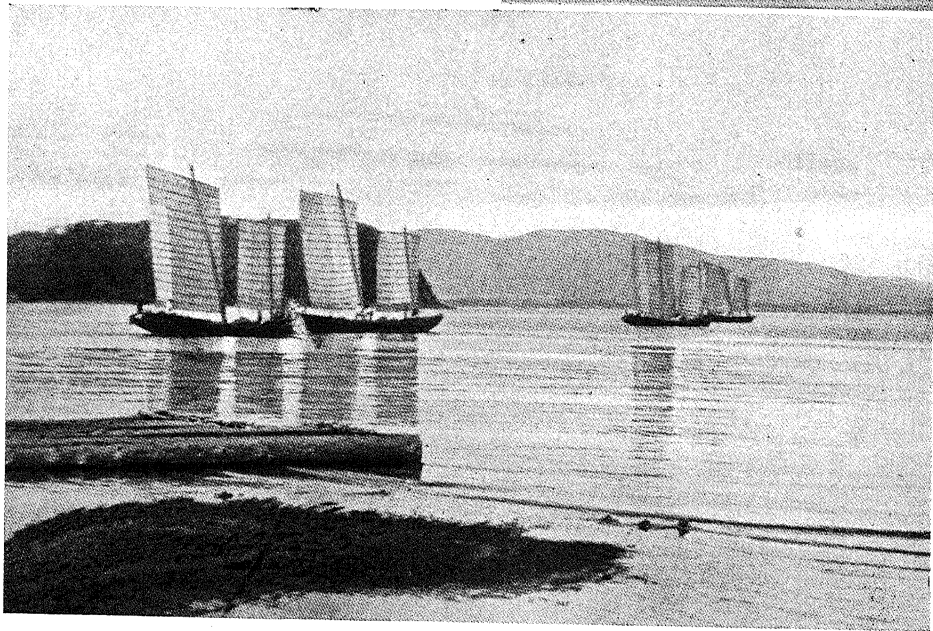


*Top:* Market-place of Nerchinsk, beginning of the nineteenth century  
*Bottom:* Chinese merchants entertained by the Commandant of Kyakhta, about 1820



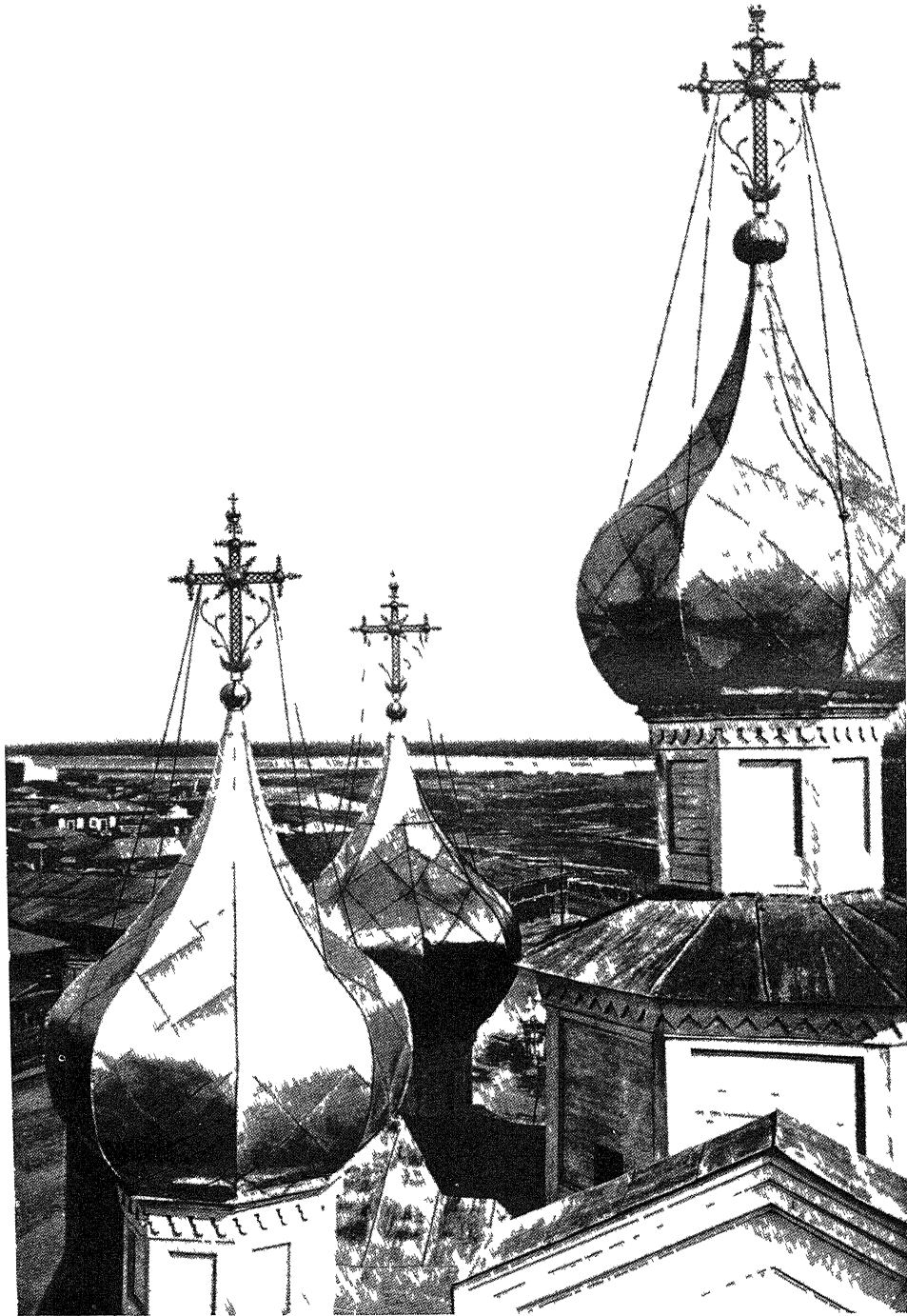


Count Nikolai Nikolayevich Muravyev-  
Amursky



Muravyev's river, the Amur





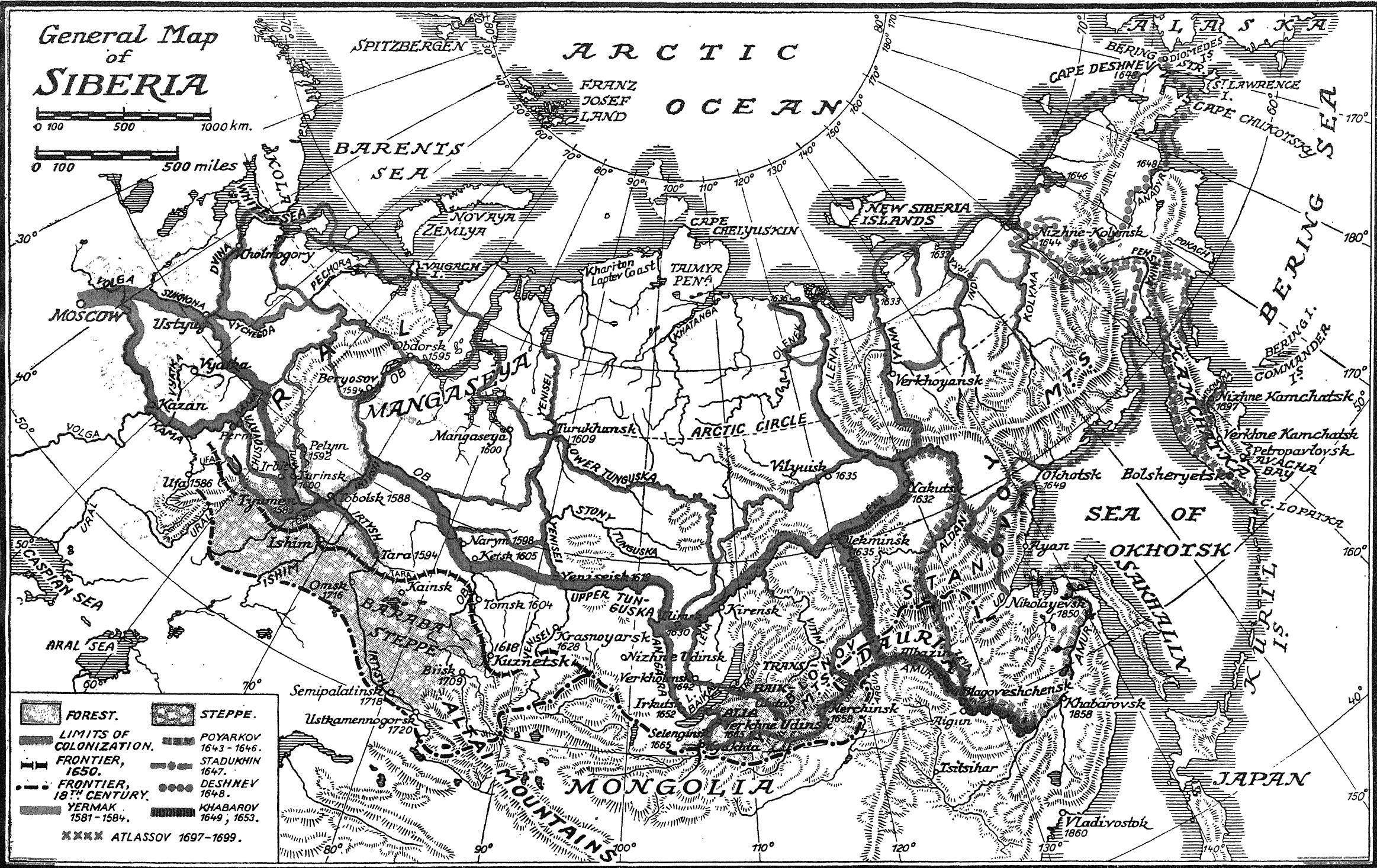
So Siberia became Russian



# General Map of SIBERIA

0 100 500 1000 km.

0 100 500 miles



- |                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| FOREST.                 | STEPPE.              |
| LIMITS OF COLONIZATION. | POYARKOV 1643-1646.  |
| FRONTIER, 1650.         | STADUKHIN 1647.      |
| FRONTIER, 18TH CENTURY. | DESHNEV 1648.        |
| YERMAK 1581-1584.       | KHABAROV 1649, 1653. |
| *** ATLASOV 1697-1699.  |                      |





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